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The Skeleton Scout.



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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SKELETON SCOUT, OR, THE BORDER BLOCK ***

THE
SKELETON SCOUT;
OR,
THE BORDER BLOCK.

BY MAJOR LEWIS W. CARSON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

17. BEN, THE TRAPPER.
22. INDIAN JO, THE GUIDE.

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THE SKELETON SCOUT;

OR,

THE BORDER BLOCK.

CHAPTER I.

A YANKEE ON A LOG.

THE scene opens upon one of those great rivers of the West, in the country which Tecumseh claimed and fought for so gallantly. The forest was at rest, save only the songs of birds and the splash of the fish leaping in the river. A thicket of bushes which bordered the path down to the water, was suddenly pushed aside and a grim face peered out, a face rendered doubly fierce by its war-paint, for it was that of an Indian of Tecumseh's noble race.

Satisfying himself that no one was in sight, the Indian rose slowly, stalked out into the path, and took his course toward the river.

Another and another followed, until ten had come into view, gliding in silence down the forest-path.

Each savage was naked save the breech-cloth and moccasins. Only the man who first showed himself, was differently dressed. He was a tall, stately warrior, bearing upon his naked breast the totem of his tribe painted in bright colors, and wearing upon his dark hair the plumed head-dress of a chief.

Each Indian carried a rifle of the most approved make in the English service, together with the inevitable scalping-knife and tomahawk.

Not one of them spoke, but followed their chief's cautious steps down to the water's edge, where, sheltering themselves behind the bushes, they peered across the stream.

It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was already out of sight behind the tree-tops on the western shore. But, not upon the glories of nature did the eyes of those fierce-visaged sons of the forest rest. What then?

Upon the other shore, close to the river, stood a log cabin of the largest size, with heavy walls and doors, calculated to resist any ordinary attack. The fields around it were green with varied crops, for it was now near the end of summer.

A strong wall of logs, hewn smooth, and leaving no chance to a climber, surrounded the house. It was plain that the builder, whoever he might be, was fully awake to the dangerous position he occupied in the midst of the Indian country, but that he did not apprehend any immediate attack was apparent, for his huge stockade gates were off the hinges and leaning against the walls on either side.

The Indians lay under cover of the bushes, their gleaming eyes riveted upon their expected prize, but they made no movement, for they beheld a man standing upon the point which stretched out into the stream, a rifle in his hand, pacing up and down as if on guard.

As they gazed a strange sight greeted their astonished vision. Something was coming down the river in mid stream. It seemed to be a man, seated in a canoe.

The current swept him rapidly downward, and, as the nondescript craft came near, they saw a man seated astride of a log, keeping its head down the current by the aid of a flat stick which he held in his hand. As he neared the stockade he began to paddle vigorously, and whirled the head of the log more toward the shore. By this time the watcher on the point had run down to the water's edge, and the click of a rifle-lock sounded.

"Ahoy, there!" he shouted.

"Hello!" replied the man on the log. "How de dew?"

"Hadn't you better come ashore?" said the sentry, persuasively, pointing his rifle.

"Seeing it's yew, I donno but I *had*," replied the navigator, coolly. "Yew seem mighty pressing, somehow."

"I'd like to persuade you to come ashore," replied the sentry, with a laugh.

"Ain't I coming?" growled the man on the log. "Yew needn't put on sech style over me, I guess! I ain't said nothing tew yew, I judge. Don't be sech a 'tarnal fool tew keep p'inting that weepin at me. It might go off."

"It will go off, if you don't come ashore, sir," replied the sentry. "Hurry up!"

The Yankee—there could be no mistake as to his nationality—turned the head of the log toward the shore, and as it struck the land, began to rise slowly from the water. The sentry kept up his attitude of command so long as his Yankee friend showed only the ordinary amount of bone and muscle, but his eyes opened as foot after foot rose from the water, and the Yankee stood six feet seven in his stockings! A queer looking specimen of the *genus homo* he was, such as, for the good of the race, nature rarely framed. In breadth of shoulder and girth of body he was no larger than men of ordinary size, and this added to his imposing hight. His face, which did not show a particle of beard, was round, good-natured and smiling, furnished with a mouth of mighty breadth, and a nose curved like the beak of an eagle. His arms were of extraordinary length, even for so tall a man, reaching nearly to the knee. His hair was of a flaming yellow.

He was dressed in a dirty shirt of homespun, which never had known any other cleansing since first put on than that it received from the clouds or streams. A black leathern belt was strapped about his waist, but it bore no more deadly weapon than an ordinary knife. His feet were covered by moccasins rudely made and tied with buck-skin strings. Upon his head he wore a cap of beaver-skin, mangy and worn bare in spots, giving him a far from prepossessing appearance. A certain whimsical, devil-may-care air marked the fellow, which was irresistible, and the sentry laughed aloud, as the long stranger faced him on the beach. The sentry was a young man in the dress of a rifleman, with the bar of a captain on his shoulders. He was a stout-built, handsome fellow, and looked with an air of commingled amusement and astonishment, at the lofty proportions of the new-comer.

"You are a nice specimen of a prize-baby," he said, running his eyes up the long, lank body.

"Yaas, yaas! My mother always said I was a sweet little infant!" replied the Yankee. "How's all the folks?"

"Oh, they are in good health. I hope you left your own family in a good state of preservation, my long friend."

"My fam'ly allers travel with me," said the stranger. "Thar ain't so many of us so't we kin afford to sep'rate. Got a right neat little place here, ain't yew? Sort o' like the looks of it myself."

"What were you doing on that log?" demanded the sentry.

"Lord love yew, I thought you knew that! I was riding."

"Any fool knows that," replied the young man, roughly.

"Then what made yew ask me, if yew know'd it so well?" demanded the Yankee, indignantly. "Yew git eout! kan' a feller-being take a ride if he wants tew?"

"Certainly."

"Waal, I was a-coming down the river, and I thought I'd ruther ride than walk, so I took to the water. But look a here, darn and blast sech contrary logs as that thar. I've bin pitched neck and crop inter the water four times in the last five miles, and darn my ear ef this ain't the trewest thing I've said this good while. I got along a darned sight better when I could get my foot on the bottom and steer that way. Yes I did."

"How far have you come?"

"I dunno nothing 'bout distances in these dangerous woods. It might have bin ten miles an' it might have bin twenty, I dunno."

"Do you travel without arms?"

"Not by a darned sight, I don't! What dew yew call them things?"

He stretched out a pair of arms nearly as long as an ordinary man's leg.

"Pshaw! I mean have you no weapons."

"Got a jack-knife," replied the Yankee, coolly.

"Is that all?"

"Ain't it enough? Thunder! yew don't want a man tew be a walking armory, dew yew?"

"You are an odd chicken. Perhaps you won't object to giving me your name?"

"No, thank yew, I don't like to give away my name. I dunno whether I could git a better one."

"What is your name?"

"Oh; yew want me tew tell my name. Waal, try Seth Spink, and see how that will work. I'm the all-firedest man yew ever did see. I've traveled from St. Louis tew Bostin, and from Oswego tew New Yorleans. Thar ain't no place on this created hemisphere where I ain't set my foot. Yaas," he continued, "I've rode alligators in the bayous of Louisiana and it make it more lively for a man, 'cause he has to keep jerking up his legs to keep the young alligators from chawin' 'em off."

"There; that lets *you* out," said the young captain. "Now I'll return your confidence. This is one of the outposts of the fur company, and my father's house at the same time. His name is Matthew Floyd. My name is William Floyd, and I have the honor to be a captain in the rifles, upon the staff of Governor Harrison."

"Glad tew meet yew, William," said the Yankee, extending a hand looking like a side of mutton. "Shake."

"Confound your impudence," said the staff officer. "It passes all belief. But come into the house and get something to eat, although I am afraid that long body will breed a famine."

"Don't yew believe it! yew give me a little hog or tew and a small beef-critter for supper, and I won't complain. I like a light meal, I dew."

"A small hog or two and a beef-critter? Do you mean to eat the provisions of the

entire garrison at a single meal?"

"'Tain't much of a garrison that don't eat no more nor that! All right; then bring me a loaf of bread and a ham, and I'll show you how tew eat."

Captain Floyd laughed, and led the way into the house through the open gate of the stockade. The Yankee had picked up a stick on the bank and was whittling away dexterously, whistling in the minor clef, but keeping his eyes about him nevertheless. He shook his head when he saw the gates off the hinges, and muttered to himself. Floyd turned upon him quickly.

"What are you growling about there? Let me know at once."

"Git eout! Waal, if yew must know, I was thinking what a darned good pertection a gate is to a house when it's off the hinges, standing ag'in' the wall."

"You are inclined to be sarcastic, and are more observing than I gave you credit for. To tell the truth up to this time we have been in no danger. The Shawnees have been friendly, and Tecumseh himself has eaten in our house. The Prophet was here only last week."

"Who?"

"The Prophet; the brother of Tecumseh, who has built a town upon the upper Wabash near Tippecanoe."

"I dunno much about it, but it seems to me I did hear summers that that Prophet is a treacherous old cuss," said Seth.

"I have heard the same, but he appeared very friendly."

The Yankee said nothing more, and they entered the house. A girl, who was reading near a window, rose to receive them, looking surprised as she saw the stranger.

"Cousin Madge," said Floyd, in a bantering tone, "let me introduce to you an errant knight who has wandered from the paternal castle even to the banks of the Wabash. His ancestral name is Spink."

"How can you, Will?" said Madge, laughing. "I am sure Mr. Spink is very welcome."

She was very beautiful—a strange flower to bloom in the wilderness. She was not the daughter of Matthew Floyd by blood, but the child of a dear friend, Herbert Carlisle, who had long ago gone down into the valley of the shadow, leaving her to his care. And when the hour of trial came to her adopted father,

she followed him boldly, to make a new home and fortune upon the prairies of the far west. She was, as we introduce her, a young girl, with hair banded back from a lofty brow, and rolled in great braids upon her regal head; a face a little browned by exposure to the sun, but very beautiful. She came forward immediately and greeted the Yankee with cordial ease and grace, and he looked down on her with a broad smile.

"A strange place tew bring sech a gal as this, Captin' Floyd," he said. "The towns would be the safest place fur her, now."

"She will not leave my father," said Floyd. "If we could have our way she would not be here. Madge, our friend is hungry. Will you go to Phillis and ask her to get him something to eat? She probably will not do it unless you speak coaxingly to her, for a more obstinate old woman never breathed."

"W'at?" exclaimed a voice. "Who you's talking 'bout, mass' Will? You t'ink cause you's white dat dis chile gwine ter lay down so dat you can tramp on her, but she ain't; no sah! I's a nigger, but Goramity he med me black hese own self, an' all de water in Egypt can't wash me white, nohow."

"Now Phillis—" said Will.

"Oh, hold you hush, do, mass' Will! You gwine 'bout to mek mischief, dat's w'at you's gwine to do! You s'pose I gwine to dirty all my dish for dis low-lived Yankee truck, gwine 'bout in de woods like a roarin' lion for to come for to go fur to eat ebbery t'ing? How we give *him* 'nough to eat, a great long shadder?"

Phillis had come up unobserved while they were talking, and stood in the doorway when Will made that allusion to her native obstinacy. She was a ponderous female, weighing very nearly three hundred pounds, being built on the model of the redoubtable Wouter Van Twiller, of famous memory, who was five feet six inches high, and six feet five inches in circumference. She held in one hand a dishcloth, and in the other a frying-pan which she had been washing when curiosity called her to the door.

"There's a sight to wake the finer feelings of our natur'," said the Yankee, looking at the negress with a grin. "A good fat, healthy female like that is a credit to human natur', she is, by Jehosaphat. She makes me think of my maternal grandmother, only the old lady had the misfortune to be white, more the pity! 'Cause the good Book teaches us thar was a good chauce of black men in Scriptor times. Now, my grandmother—"

"See yer," said the old housekeeper, "you's git inter trouble one of dese days, ef

you fool roun' dis chile. G'way, g'way, you's makin' mischief! Oh, gosh all to pieces, you gwine stan' dar and poke fun at me all de time? Berry well; wait till I gub you any t'ing to eat, dats all!"

"But, aunty—" said Madge, coaxingly. "How can you act so?"

"Dar, dar, chile! 'Tain't dat I valley cookin' de leastest bit, it do mek me powerful mad when dey pokes fun at me."

"Did the old lady think I was funnin'?" said the Yankee, with a solemn face. "I wa'n't, now that's a fact. My grandmother was a bu'ster, now you'd better believe! Why, ef you was to put her on one end of a beam, and this old lady on the other, you'd see this old lady fly like a bird in the air. She wouldn't weigh a feather alongside of my old lady, that gal wouldn't."

"Tole 'em I wa'n't so drefful fat," said Phillis, considerably mollified. "But, dey won't none ob 'em beliebe me, nohow. Dar; I's go an' see w'at I kin pick up for de gemman. Would you like some venison?"

"Yaas."

"Or mebbe veal would suit ye better?"

"I ain't partic'lar. I'll taste 'em both. Ef ye've got some pickles handy, throw a bushel or two on the table with a couple of hams, and two or three loaves of bread. Any thing will dew for a *lunch*."

Phillis looked at him very much as she would have looked at a dangerous maniac unfit to go at large, and went slowly out into the kitchen, the floor shaking under her ponderous tread. The next moment a storm of vituperation directed at the heads of her satellites, announced that she was at work, and a savory smell was wafted to their nostrils. Seth pricked up his ears like the war-horse "that smelleth the battle afar off," and waited. When the table was set, he marched in and gave Phillis a grand exemplification of the power of a good appetite. Pone bread in huge masses leaped down his capacious maw. Slice after slice of venison followed, washed down by various cups of coffee. Phillis, appalled at his appreciation of her cookery, watched with uplifted hands, and finally fled to Will Floyd in dismay.

"You git dat wolf outer dis house jus' as quick as you kin! He stay har one week an' he eat us out ob house an' home."

CHAPTER II.

WILLIMACK, THE WYANDOT.

By the time the Yankee had finished his repast, night had come on, and he came hurrying out of the kitchen, with his mouth full of venison steak, and ran to the window.

"How many dew yew reckon in this post, boss?" he said, turning to the young soldier.

"Myself, my father, two soldiers of the rifles, and two black boys."

"Yaas. Now let me ask yew a little question. Does it look like common sense for yew tew keep yure gates off the hinges?"

"To tell you the truth, I have some doubts myself, but the Prophet seemed to think it showed confidence in the Indians on the Wabash to leave the gates open, and it was more to please him than any thing else that we did it."

"The Prophet? Now, see here, captin; I ain't bin but a little while in this kentry, but I know what the Shawnee Prophet is. He's a treacherous old fox. He's got some plot ag'in' the people of this section, and I know it, sartin sure! Jest see the raft of villains he's got round him up thar on the Wabash. Kickapoos, Winnebagoes, Micmacs, Shawnees, and the Old Scratch knows what other nations—the riff-raff and off-scourings of the tribes. They're nice fellers to live nigh, ain't they?"

"I have often thought them dangerous," said Floyd. "But what can we do?"

"Yew kan put up yure gates, anyhow. And say; hadn't yew better call in yure men, ef yew've got any outlyin', 'cause it's gittin' dark."

"I think you are right," said Floyd.

He took down a horn, and going to the door, took a long breath and blew a gallant blast, which echoed far and wide through the depths of the forest. Shortly after, the tramp of coming feet could be heard, and there emerged from the woods behind the house four men advancing at a hurried pace. As they entered the stockade the Yankee saw that two of them were common soldiers of the American army, one an Indian of the Shawnee nation, and the fourth an old man with white hair. The Yankee swung himself up on the head of a cask standing within the stockade, and, taking out a piece of pigtail tobacco, twisted off a mighty "chaw," and sat there, rolling the sweet morsel under his tongue.

"What made you so late, father?" said young Floyd, advancing.

"Willimack got puzzled in regard to the path, and if we had not heard your horn, I do not know how long we might have stumbled about in the darkness."

The Yankee uttered a long whistle and thrust his tongue into his cheek. The sound drew the attention of the old man to him, and he scanned him curiously.

"Who is this?" he said.

"A traveler, who has stopped here for shelter," replied the young man, coming forward. "What did you mean by that whistle, Spink?"

"Sho, now! Don't be so blasted inquisitive. I wouldn't, anyhow. I'll tell yew by an by; but, the fust thing yew dew is to put up them gates, do ye hear?"

The Indian had been standing just within the gates, and, as he heard the voice of the stranger, he cast a quick glance in his direction, and his hand stole to the handle of his hatchet. But, the Yankee sat upon the cask, beating time with his heels upon the sides, and muttering to himself. The Indian stalked gravely to his side, and looked fiercely into his face. The savage was a rather good-looking brave of the Wyandot tribe, whose powerful limbs, strong shoulders, and muscular hands gave promise of great strength. The down-easter endured his fixed gaze for the space of three minutes without moving a muscle of his set face, until the savage spoke.

"Who is this?" he said. "Dare you come here to sing an evil song in the ears of my father with the gray hair, to make him distrust his brethren of the Shawnees and Wyandots?"

"Oh, git eout! Who said any thing tew yew? The most cantankerous Injin I ever see in all my born days."

"You laugh at Willimack, the chief? Why should my father put up his strong gates?"

"'Cause he's a man of sense, I guess. Now, don't rile up, Injin, *don't!* 'Tain't that I care any thing about yew, understand, but I sort o' hate to see things go this way. Willimack, they call you?"

"Willimack is my name."

"All right. Been guiding this party on a prospecting tour, so tew speak?"

"We have been exploring," said the elder Floyd.

"See any Injin signs?" asked Seth.

"A great many," replied the old man. "What of that? The Indians are friendly now."

"Glad to hear it, 'cause I didn't know it. So this man Willimack *lost his way*?"

"Yes."

"Youngster," said the Yankee, leaping off the barrel, "you come here a minnit. I want tew speak with yew."

Young Floyd went with the Yankee aside, followed by the suspicious glances of the savage, who would have gone aside with them, but Floyd signed to him sternly to keep back, and he obeyed, chafing inwardly.

"Look here," said Spink, when they were out of ear-shot. "They say we Yankees are a little gumptious, an' I guess we be, but, it don't need much smartness tew see threw *his* gilding. That Injin is a Wyandot, and knows every foot of the soil along the Wabash, and yit he *loses his way*! Now, does that sound nat'ral? I only ask yew fair."

"It does look strange."

"Then put up yure gate. I won't tell yew *why*, but it'll be better for yew. Now I'll tell yew how tew prove Willimack, cuss him! Go out an' offer tew put up the gates, and yew see ef he don't huff and want tew hurry away."

"Let him go."

"Umph! No; don't dew any thing of the kind. Keep him all night, by all means."

"For what purpose?"

"Never mind. Yew will find eout, afore morning. Oh, blame my cats ef it ain't hard tew git any thing threw yew! Why don't yew go an' put up them cussed gates?"

"I will do it," said the young man, turning back quickly. "Here, Forbes, Lefebre! I want you to help me put up these gates."

Willimack started and turned upon the young man almost fiercely, for his eyes burned like glowing coals. The young soldier looked at him in surprise.

"Let my young brother pause before he puts his hands to something for which he will be sorry," said the Wyandot. "He has trusted the great tribe, and they have never deceived him, then why should he do wrong to them now? Let the gates

rest. There is nothing to fear from the Shawnees and Wyandots."

"The Indians have no right to be angry if we close our doors," replied Floyd. "There are good warriors as well as bad, and some of these wicked ones might chance to pass by."

"Then the chiefs of the Shawnee would punish them," said Willimack.

"That would be but little help to us, you understand," said Floyd, "after they had taken our scalps. No, I think I will close the gates."

"Don't let him waste time talkin'. Shet 'em up now!"

"Ha, dog of the long back," screamed Willimack, "do you come to make a bad heart between the Indians and their white friends? Willimack will drink your blood."

"Ah, no yew won't," replied long Seth, with admirable composure, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking keenly at the savage. "Yew ain't so dry as that comes tew. Shet them gates, darn yew! I tell yew not tew lose time!"

Willimack suddenly drew his hatchet and rushed at the imperturbable Yankee, who did not even take his hands from his pockets, but, when the Indian came within reach, planted his moccasined foot in the region of the knife-belt, with a force which sent the Wyandot flying against the side of the stockade, half stunned. The elder Floyd would have helped him up, but Spink demanded of him angrily to desist, and help them to raise the gates, while the negro boys brought out the heavy bars and had them ready to drop into their places. Just as they were about to raise the first gate to its place, the Indian staggered to his feet, and turned to go away.

"Farewell, men of the bad heart," he said. "A deep sorrow has come upon the heart of Willimack. His soul is very sad, because the brother with the gray hair has turned against him."

"Oh, hush up, yew," said the Yankee, releasing his hold on the gate, "and git intew yure corner ag'in."

"No," said Willimack, "I will stay no longer in the place where I have been insulted."

"Yew won't, eh?"

"No; Willimack will go."

"I differ; Willimack will *stay*. Yew ain't goin' tew git eout and call yure

comrades up here afore we git the gates in shape. Don't yew b'lieve it!"

"I really think you are too fast, my friend," said the elder Floyd. "The Indians have always treated me well."

"I don't care a darn how they've treated yew. That Injin ain't goin' out of this gate till it's hung; and if yew take my advice, yew'll keep him till morning, 'cause I b'lieve my soul he's got comrades outlying in them bushes."

"I will go!" screamed Willimack. "Who will stay the course of the chief of the Wyandots?"

"This identical cuss. Yew offer tew go eout of this gate, and I'll give yew a back-hander that will make yew forgit yure parents. Now yew bet yure boots on *that*."

Willimack was no coward, and made a rush at the immovable figure of the Yankee, knife in hand.

For the first time the ire of Seth Spink seemed to be fully aroused, and, rushing at the chief with a snarl like that of a wild beast, he caught him by the wrist, and, giving it a wrench, shook the weapon from his grasp. Then, seizing him by the shoulders, he lifted him from the ground, shook him as a terrier shakes a cat, and dashed him to the earth with stunning force.

"Bring ropes here!" he hissed. "The devil is in this condemned skunk, bigger than a woodchuck."

Will Floyd threw him some pieces of buck-skin, with which he bound the feet of the savage, and then sprung up to work upon the gate.

"Work, ye devils, work!" he shouted, applying his Herculean strength to the huge door. "Up with her, quick! How a man of yure understanding could take them gates off the hinges I don't know."

"We thought it would please the savages," said the elder Floyd. "I am afraid we are doing wrong."

"Ef yew don't sing another song in less than an hour, then I'm a nigger. Heave with a will, boys; no time to lose. It's the mercy of God that yure son blew that horn for yew tew-night, mister, or Willimack would have led yew into an ambush."

"I can hardly believe that, sir," said the old man.

"Can't yew? Take hold of that gate there. Lift away! What's that? Somebody give the son of a tinker a belt in the mouth."

Willimack, lying upon his back, had begun a succession of fearful yells, intended to hasten the movements of his friends. He was answered by a cry so close at hand that the people of the stockade were appalled by the closeness of their enemies. They worked away with desperate zeal, and with a cry of delight felt the door swing to its place and dropped the heavy bars before it. Long Seth turned in a fury upon the Indian.

"Yew ought to have yure coat tails filled chock full of *boots*—old boots, big boots, heavy boots, long boots, and moccasins tew match. Ef I had my way, yew'd git it, tew. Ah, yew pizen critter!"

As he spoke, they heard the sound of rushing feet, and the first of the savage band who had been lying upon the other bank of the stream, and who had crossed at dusk, rushed up against the gate and uttered loud cries of disappointment as they found it strongly barred against them. The signal of Willimack had come somewhat sooner than they expected; indeed, they had been waiting for him to lead Floyd and his soldiers into their ambush, and they were sorely disappointed when they heard his voice within the stockade. Nevertheless, they expected an easy prey, for they did not know that the acute Yankee had taken measures to have the gates put up. He answered their yells of disappointed rage by wild laughter.

"Haw! haw! haw! Didn't expect *that*, did yew? *Now* what dew yew say about the gates, mister?"

"I say that you have saved our lives, and we thank you," replied the old man. "I was foolish to trust a proverbially treacherous race. What do you think they will do now?"

"Kan't say," replied the Yankee. "Try tew gammon us, mebbe. It would be jest like 'em, by gosh. Neow I'm green, I allow; I'm awful green, that's a petrified trewth. But, I dew think Seth Spink is ekal in p'int of intellect to any Shawnee on the footstool, saving one man."

"And that man?"

"Tecumseh," replied Seth, shortly. "Now look here: We c'u'd hev had the good will of that man ef we was a mind tew, but we wouldn't hev it. Neow let me tell yew that he ain't no fool, the sachem ain't. Thar's wuss Ginerals in our army, tew. Let it go; we've made a mistake, and he's our inimy, I'm sorry tew say. These chaps want tew speak tew yew."

The Indians were pounding at the door of the stockade, and calling to the Floyds,

under the names by which they were known to the Indians, to come out and speak to them.

"I will answer them," said Captain William. "In the mean time, load all the rifles and get out a supply of ammunition. I believe they mean to make the assault to-night, though how a dozen Indians mean to beat half that number of whites behind a strong stockade, I can not tell."

He stepped to a loophole and looked out. The warriors were grouped carelessly about the large gates, striking them with their hatchets, and making all the noise they could.

"What do you want here?" demanded Will. "Are the night-owls flying low to-night?"

"The warriors of the Shawnees would rest to-night under the roof of the Gray Hair," replied one of the braves. "Let him open his great gates, that we may enter."

"Let my brothers seek other shelter to-night," answered young Floyd. "A bird has sung in my ears to-day, warning me that the Shawnees and white men must not sleep under the same roof to-night. Shawnee braves are not children; let them rest under the bending boughs, and may they sleep well."

"Hugh!" cried the spokesman. "Does the young war-chief refuse a place under his roof to his friends?"

"We do not want any visitors to-night," replied the young man, firmly.

A chorus of angry cries arose, in the midst of which the Yankee sprung to the young man's side and whispered in his ear. He nodded gravely, and called out to the Shawnees to be silent. A hush fell upon them and he spoke again:

"I know that the Shawnees have come with malice in their hearts, and would have slain us if the gates had not been barred. Let them go back as they came, for if a single Shawnee is in sight when morning breaks, Willimack shall die."

"Would you slay the great chief of the Wyandots, the beloved of the Prophet?"

"Yes, and he deserves death a hundred times for his treachery."

"Willimack is the friend of the white man," replied the outside speaker.

"Yes, of the English," replied Seth.

"Dog of a Yengee!" shrieked a voice close at hand, "Willimack, chief of the

Wyandots, laughs you to scorn."

The Yankee whirled quickly, and saw Willimack free from his bonds, standing upon the summit of the stockade. The next moment he waved his hand in derision and was gone.

CHAPTER III.

THE SKELETON SCOUT.

To their utter surprise, the Yankee ran madly toward the high wall of the stockade, and, leaping upward, clung like a cat to the top. It seemed hardly possible that so heavy a person could display such agility, and certainly no one in the stockade would have thought Long Seth capable of it, but for the way in which he had handled the Indian. He hung a moment upon the edge of the stockade, and then, drawing himself up by a strong muscular action, looked over. Then, waving his hand toward the occupants, he slid over the outside and dropped to the earth. No sound indicated that the savages had heard him, for they remained pounding at the gate, uttering wild threats against the Floyds if they did not open.

Somewhat surprised at the desertion of the Yankee, Will Floyd made no answer until the harsh voice of Willimack came to his ears.

"Hark to my words," shouted the chief. "You have disgraced Willimack, a chief of the mighty tribe. Dogs could not be used worse than you have treated him. I am not a fool and I will have revenge."

"Leave the gates," replied Floyd, angrily, "or my men shall fire."

"Let them fire at us if they will," replied the chief. "We will enter the big wigwam. I will eat the heart of the man who shook me, and kicked me with his foot."

"I tell you to go away!" said Will Floyd. "I have no desire to quarrel with you, but if you try to break in here it is your own fault if you get hurt."

The only reply was the crash of axes against the heavy gate, and the young man saw that they were determined upon making a persistent effort to break in. Bringing forward a short ladder which was lying near the wall of the house, he

ran up to the top of the wall and fired his pistol at the Indians below, and knew by the cry of rage which went up that he had not missed his mark.

This determined course roused the ire of the savages and they began to bring up poles to climb the walls, full of hatred of the men inside. Will shouted to his men and they brought their ladders—for they had one for each defender, and the walls were manned. The number of savages was not great enough for an assault; yet they fought with determination. They climbed like cats up the sides of the wooden fort only to be beaten back by the defenders. Each soldier, besides his rifle, had a hatchet and a pair of pistols, and so armed, they were more than a match for the Shawnees, who retreated to a little distance, out of reach of the rifles, where they halted and seemed to consult for a moment.

Just then came a horrible yell, and, to the utter terror of the Indians, there bounded from a thicket near at hand a fearful creature calculated to strike terror to the stoutest heart. To the white men looking on from the wall, there was something supernatural in this strange appearance flaming out in the darkness. Two blazing eyes gleamed in its forehead, emitting lurid flashes as it bounded on. In height it was nearly seven feet, and the head was that of a skeleton, grinning and ghastly!

The Indians saw that terrible creature coming down upon them, and, with wild cries of dread, they broke and ran in every direction, some seeking safety on the river and others running up the bank. Will Floyd beheld the figure seize upon a flying savage and drag him shrieking to the earth; then a great silence fell upon the scene. All was dark outside; the Indians were gone, and, in the place where the fiery figure gleamed a moment before, nothing was to be seen. Soon after the sound of hurrying feet was heard, and the Yankee came climbing over the rear of the stockade, evidently terrified nearly out of his senses.

"Did you see it?" he cried. "Oh, holy Moses! I never was so skeered in all my born days! Whew; I'm out of breath!"

"What did you leave us for?"

"Wanted to ketch that Injin. I couldn't, though; he run so like the devil. Then I calculated I'd git round in the rear and give 'em a shot, an then holler as ef a hundred sojers was in the woods, when, Jehosaphat! up got that b'ilin'-hot Image, with his fiery eyes, and skeered the life out of them Injins, and me too, I guess."

The Yankee sat down on a log and panted for breath.

"Did you see it closely?" said Floyd.

"Close as I want tew, darn it! This beats my fust wife's relations all tew pieces. Whew! I thought I were a goner."

The men looked at each other in surprise. What was this strange being, that came and went like a shadow, leaving no trace behind? Will Floyd was not naturally superstitious, and yet he could not account for this apparition in any natural way. Long Seth evidently was as much puzzled, and looked from one to the other in ludicrous dismay. The black boys, who also had seen the specter, stood with chattering teeth and a sort of ashy gray color in their faces. Nature had made it impossible for their hair to stand up straight or it would surely have done so, then.

"Hi, you Pomp," said one, "see dat ar' t'ing, dat time?"

"Iss, Dick; I seen him, an I so skeered I dunno w'at I's gwine ter do. Oh goodness gracious!"

"Dat's de debbil, Pomp. Dat's juss de Ole Harry, heself, an' notting else. We's gone chiles dese times."

"That's trew," said Seth, glad of an opportunity to pass his dread onto some one else. "And I have hern tell that the old 'un is partial to black fellows. Mebbe 'tain't trew; I ain't enuff 'quainted with the Old Boy to speak *sartin*, but I've good reason to believe that he duz like 'em."

"Sho, now, *you!*" roared Pomp, raising one leg in agony. "Git along dar! w'at you a-tryin' to do, say? De old debbil likes a Yankee. Eberybody knows he likes a Yankee."

"I don't think it," said Seth, as if revolving the subject in his mind. "May be jest as yew say, but, I think they'd make it tew lively fur the old man down thar. They'd trade him out of his throne, *sartin!* They ar' all-fired hands at a dicker, yew know, and they'd beat him, *sartin!* So I guess Yankees are pooty safe. Not *too* safe, yew understand, but pooty safe, pooty safe. I don't reckon they'll trouble us a great deal, nohow. Guess we'd better git a light an' go out an' try them cussed Injins, and see what's likely to be done."

"Maybe they are hiding somewhere," said Will Floyd. "If they are, it would not be safe to go out."

"Waal, ef I'm any judge, they ain't hiding anywhar on this side the river," rejoined Seth. "I hern 'em jump intew the water, an' swim as ef the devil was chasin' 'em clust. Yew see they're mighty feared of the devil, and ef that wa'n't him, then I dunno what it was. Old Satan on a scout, shure!"

"Did you ever hear of this figure before?"

"Yaas," said Spink. "When I was in old man Harrison's camp they said something 'bout it and they called it the Skeleton Scout."

"The Skeleton Scout!"

"That's the name. 'Tain't a purty name, nyther. Not by no manner of means. It makes me shake all over when I think the pesky critter is round here, though I must own he has an all-fired good way of cleaning out red-skins. Git a lantern or a torch."

Will went into the house for a lantern, and when he came back Seth took it from his hand and gave it to Black Dick.

"Here, boy, take that and go out and look around to see if any of the red niggers are hiding anywhere."

"*Me*, massa?"

"Yaas, yew! Who else do yew s'pose I mean? Come, don't keep us a-waiting. Why don't yew git?"

"But, mars' I dunno w'edder I likes to go out dar. Plenty Injin out dar, I t'inks. How we ebber fine 'em?"

"Oh, go 'long! That's what we want tew find out, whether they are or not. Ef they should be, why then they'll shoot at yew, and we'll hear 'em."

"S'pose dey hits Dick?" said the negro.

"Why then, Dick will holler like all possessed, and put back ef he kin. Ef he *kain't*, then we'll bury the sed Dick with the honors of war."

"See yer, marse Yankee, you t'ink I ain't a fool, I ain't. I's gwine ter stay yer."

"Then mebbe Pomp would like to go, seeing *he* ain't a coward? Come, Pomp; distinguish yerself and laugh at Dick."

"Don't tink's I keer 'bout it, marse," replied Pomp. "Dick good fren' ob mine. What I wants to laugh at he for?"

Long Seth laughed, and taking a pistol from the belt of one of the soldiers, led the way into the open air. An Indian lay under the wall, and the Yankee stumbled over him. Seth held the light closer and saw that the savage had a broken leg.

"Got a knife, boss?" he said, speaking to Will Floyd.

"Certainly I have."

"Stick this man and come along. I'd dew it myself only I've got both hands full."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't want tew save the red nigger, dew yew?"

"I will not allow him to be killed," replied the young soldier.

The Yankee straightened his long back, and looked at the young man as if taken completely aback by this speech. "Not kill a red-skin? Not stick him when yew've got him? By the mortal, ef this ain't pizen. Not—good gracious, yew raise my dander mortal bad! What yew goin' tew dew with the critter then, if I may ask 'thout giving offense?"

"Take him into the stockade, cure him of his wound if possible, and—"

"Give him yure skulp when he gits strong enuff tew take it! That's right! Keep up the repitation of the fam'ly, by all means! Waal, I won't say no more. Come along, yew! But, if the time don't come when yew jest ez live stick an Injin as eat a b'iled potater, then ther ain't no snakes in Kentuck'."

They hurried on to the place where the Skeleton Scout had been seen; the grass was bent and trodden down, and, further on, an Indian was lying on his face, dead. Floyd turned him over, and saw that it was a Winnebago, a desperate villain, who had been suspected of the murder of a white family, years before, but escaped through insufficient evidence. However, innocent or guilty, he had met his fate at last.

"How was he killed?" said Floyd. "I don't see any blood."

They examined him closely, but not a mark could be found upon the body to show how he had died. Dead he certainly was, and the stiffened muscles told that he had not died easily. The puzzled look again came into the face of Seth Spink.

"Now, don't this beat all natur'?" he ejaculated. "We'll hev tew believe pooty soon that the Skileton Scout is a skileton, arter all. Leastways he don't leave no marks upon his victims."

"It is strange indeed," replied Captain Floyd. "Hold the lantern close, will you? There *must* be a mark on him somewhere."

A still closer search failed to elicit any further information. The Indian was dead, but how? He had not been choked, for the face of a man who dies in that way always shows unmistakable signs of strangulation. His neck was not broken, as

Floyd began to believe, and not a drop of blood was visible upon his person.

Yankee Seth stood holding the lantern, and looking down upon the face of the dead Indian, while his young companion was searching him. A slight noise, so slight that Floyd did not notice it, but Seth heard it, yet did not turn his head or show that he was aroused. Looking covertly toward the spot he saw a dark object extended upon the earth, not ten feet away, and caught the gleam of a rifle-barrel. Giving his companion a sudden push which sent him rolling to the earth, Long Seth bounded four feet into the air just as a rifle cracked, and came down uninjured upon the back of a prowling savage, who, hiding in the bushes, had crept up unobserved.

As Will Floyd started to his feet, confused and angry, a terrific struggle was going on upon the grass a few feet away. Seth found his enemy, whoever it was, "no chicken," to use his own expression, and his powerful muscles were tried to the utmost.

Will Floyd darted forward, but the lantern had gone out and he dared not strike in the darkness, fearing that he might wound his friend. Then, two figures rose; there was a muttered curse, and a heavy blow or two, and the sound of hurrying feet succeeded, followed immediately by a splash in the water, and Seth came back, furiously angry.

"He got away, the cussed sneak," he said. "He'd 'a' cooked yure goose or mine in another minnit. Lucky I saw him."

"Why did you push me down?" cried Floyd, angrily.

"Did it jest tew be mean, young'un," said the Yankee, indolently. "Did it a-purpuss. Yure head was rite in a line with a rifle-barrill, and like ez not yew'd 'a' got hurt if yew'd 'a' stood up half a second longer. 'Tain't no matter."

"I beg your pardon, Spink," said Will, frankly. "I was so confused by your sudden action that I really did not know what to do or say. So you pushed me down because the rifle was aimed at *me*?"

"Sorter think I did! There; don't say nothin' 'bout it. Let's git back tew the stockade. 'Tain't edzackly safe tew stay here now; these critters mout come back, yew know, and a shot from a bush ain't what I hanker arter."

The rifle-shot had been heard, and Captain Floyd, with one of the soldiers, was hurrying out to meet them. He expressed his satisfaction at their safety, and listened eagerly to their explanations.

"The day of safety is over, then," he said. "All my endeavors to make friends with the savages have been of no avail. What had we better do, Mr. Spink? You seem to understand the Indians better than I do, after all."

"Any one is likely tew git fooled," replied the Vermonter. "Yew can't bet a cent on an Injin. Mout be friendly tew yer face while he was stealing out a knife tew take yure skulp. I'm sorry the gal is here; she ort tew be in the village."

"We can take her there."

"'Tain't safe. The road is full of red-skins. I tell yew that the Prophet—darned little profit we'll make eout of it—is up, and his cussid black-and-tan tribe are with him. 'Twon't be many days afore the woods will be full of the pizen heathen. My advice ain't much, but, if I was yew, I'd send one of the men tew Guvnor Harrison for reinforcements, and stay here til they cum."

"You think that the safest plan?"

"It's the only one I think of. Willimack 'll be on the watch, and yew kain't git eout. Give the man that goes a canoe and send him down-stream. I'll go with him and show the way."

"Who shall go?"

"I," replied Will, promptly.

"I am afraid we can not spare you, William," said the captain. "Let Forbes go."

"One more or less won't make no manner of difference," said Seth. "I think the young 'un is in the right of it, and I'll pilot him till I think he's safe. Look out sharp, night and day, till we come back. Now, young 'un!"

There was no time for long partings. Will ran into the house to bid Madge good-by, and came back with traces of emotion on his face. Then, pressing his father's hand, he followed the erect figure of Seth Spink out into the gloom.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT OF PERIL.

THE darkness was intense, but the Yankee moved on like a man who knew the ground well, toward the spot where the canoes were hauled up on the shore.

They selected a light one, and the young soldier found a paddle and would have taken his place as paddler, but the other took it from his hand, and stationed himself in that place himself.

The canoe shot out into the darkness at once, and was headed down the river, gliding in between the green banks, the paddle dipping in the bright water without a sound! Nothing but long practice could have enabled any man to use a paddle so dexterously. On they floated down the tranquil stream in the darkness, while nothing but the cry of the loon and other night-birds disturbed the solemn stillness of the scene. Once Captain Will began to speak, but the guide laid his hand upon his knee with a low "Hist!" Floyd took the hint and was silent. He began to understand that the danger must be great, or the sagacious Yankee would not work so cautiously. He also began to feel a sort of respect for the knowledge of woodcraft which he saw that the strange man possessed, a great trait in a borderman.

After paddling on for nearly an hour, without making the slightest noise, the head of the canoe was turned toward the shore at a place where the overhanging bushes almost touched the water. Parting these bushes with great caution, Seth pushed the canoe past them, and showed an open space between the bushes and the bank deep enough for the canoe to lie in, without being seen from the bank above.

"Yew stay right here, cap.," whispered the Yankee. "I'm going on a scout."

"Had not you better let me go with you?" queried the young man.

"Yew! Kin yew walk like yew was steppin' on feathers, and hold yure breath an hour? Dew yew know every inch of ground atween this and Harrison's camp? and kin yew set down 'thout breaking a stick? Ther's a deal tew learn 'fore yew make a good scout."

"I know it. Perhaps I had better stay here then."

"Waal, prehabs yew had," said the Yankee. "Gimme that hatchet. All right; now lay low and keep dark. If yew hear the painter call three times, that's *me*."

So silently did he move away, that Will hardly knew when he went. Lying down in the canoe, which was kept in its place by the bushes which hung low on all sides, the young man waited anxiously for the coming of his friend. An hour passed, and there came no sound to indicate the whereabouts of his strange guide. He was about to give him up, and had almost concluded to take the paddle and attempt to escape in his own way, when he heard light footsteps on the bank

above. Thinking that it was Seth Spink, and that he was returning with less caution than he showed in moving away, he was about to rise and meet him, when he heard a deep voice on the bank above, which was not that of the Yankee.

"Willimack?" it said.

"I am here, great chief," replied a voice which he well knew. "What would the Prophet say to his brother chief?"

"You have done wrong, Wyandot," said the other. "You have opened the eyes of the white men, and if the young war-chief gets safe to Vincennes, we can no longer throw dust in the eyes of Harrison. This was not well."

"Willimack would have had the scalps of all, but for the tall warrior who came on the log. He opened the eyes of Floyd, and he saw blood in the eyes of the Wyandot."

"Who is the tall warrior?"

"My brother has seen him many times at Vincennes. His hair is yellow as the rays of the setting sun, and his form tall as a pine. He is very strong and bold. Who is there in the Wyandot nation, unless it be Tecumseh, who can overthrow Willimack, the Wyandot?"

"The Long Man is very strong," said the other. "He is cunning as the red fox. But, he is on the river, and my brothers above and below will give a good account of him if he try to escape."

Floyd raised himself slowly and peered up at the two, but could not make out who the speaker was. Willimack had spoken of him as the Prophet, but it might be either Tecumseh, or his brother, Elskwatawa, the man who was properly known by the appellation of "the Prophet," and to whom is imputed the odium of drawing the great Tecumseh into war with the whites. At this moment the moon rose slowly over the tree-tops, and shed a light upon the tranquil scene, and he could see their faces. It was Elskwatawa, the Prophet, and a more cruel or ambitious man never lived upon the earth. Cunning was the great trait upon which he prided himself; and while to all appearance friendly with the whites, he was gathering the Indians for that great movement which was to sweep the enemy from the face of the earth. Will Floyd was a bold man, but even he felt a thrill at the imminence of the danger by which he was threatened. The Prophet leaned against a tree, not ten feet away, and Willimack, with his hands clasped upon the muzzle of his rifle, stood close to him.

"The moon shines bright," said the Prophet. "They can not pass unless we see them. Ha! what is this?"

He pointed with his hand to a canoe with a single occupant which was crossing the river in front, and heading directly toward the spot where the two chiefs stood. They disappeared as if suddenly blotted out of existence, crawling like serpents in the dense underbrush, and Will turned to watch the new-comer. The moon was now bright, and he could see him plainly.

It was a chief, in the war-dress of a Pottawatomie, bedizened in all the bravery these men love to affect in a time of war. He was tall and strongly made, with a rather handsome face, and dark, brilliant eyes. A rifle lay in the bow of his canoe, and in the belt about his waist he carried a hatchet and knife. His keen eyes swept along the bank for a moment, and then he pushed his canoe up to the beach not ten feet from the place where Will Floyd lay hidden, and drew it up out of sight. Then, taking his rifle, he mounted the bank. In doing so, he laid his rifle down, and when he stooped to take it up, the two men on the watch rose suddenly and threw themselves upon him. So sudden was the onset that the warrior was taken completely by surprise, and was bound before he could speak or move, though he now made desperate efforts to break his bonds.

"Ha! Dead Chief," cried Elskwatawa. "Dead dog, we have you now! Prepare to sing your death-song, for the Shawnees and Wyandots will not wait long before they drink the blood of a fool."

The two seized him, dragged him to his feet and bound him to a tree close at hand, cursing him in no measured tones.

The name they gave him satisfied the young man as to who the prisoner was, and he knew that he was a friend to the American cause, who had boldly offered to confront Tecumseh in his own person, and prove that he meditated hostile designs against the Americans. He had called both Tecumseh and his brother traitors, and offered to tax them with it in the presence of the two brothers and their followers. This declaration was made in the presence of Tecumseh's friends, and the chief was quickly made aware of the fact.

Neither had seen the Dead Chief until this time. He looked at them boldly, with a half-smile upon his face, and Will Floyd fingered his weapons and longed to spring out to his aid. But, the danger in which he had left his family, and his fears for the safety of Madge, had made him wary. Elskwatawa drew a knife and ran his fingers along the polished edge in a significant way.

"Dead Chief," he said, "you are a Pottawatomie, and the men of that tribe are

brave. But every tribe brings forth dogs, and such a dog are you. You care nothing for the glory of the race, and will not join the great Tecumseh in making the people free."

"Tecumseh is a fool," replied the Dead Chief. "He does not know that the sun warms him and the moon gives him light. Why should we change masters? The white men will always rule the Indians, because they are wiser than we. Why do you stop the Dead Chief on his way?"

"The Dead Chief will be dead in half an hour," replied the Prophet. "He knows too much of Tecumseh and his plans."

"Let me free, and I will go into the camp of Tecumseh and beard him. Did he dare to give you orders to take the life of the Dead Chief?"

"You shall see. Stay here, Willimack, while I call some warriors to see the death of a dog who cares not for his race."

"Wait," said Willimack. "If the Dead Chief is to die, we must build no fire, for that would show the young war-chief and the yellow-haired scout that the Shawnees and Wyandots are on the trail."

"Good. The Dead Chief shall not die yet, for I have sworn he shall perish by fire, and so he shall die. Elskwatawa has spoken. Let us leave the Dead Chief here and look for the young war-chief and the Yellow Hair, and we'll burn them all at one fire."

The two Indians glided away, and as they went, the Dead Chief began to struggle furiously with his bonds, but they were too strongly tied to break easily. In spite of his efforts he remained bound to the tree, still making impotent efforts. His face did not express fear so much as anger and humiliation at having been outwitted by the men he affected to despise. The moment the two captors were gone, Floyd slipped out of his concealment and approached the Pottawatomie.

"Ugh," said the Dead Chief. "My brother sees a friend tied up like a dog. Let him loose the bonds upon his hands and feet."

The young man obeyed, and the warrior rubbed his excoriated limbs to restore the circulation, muttering to himself. Then he searched about in the moonlight, and carefully covered the trail which the young soldier had made in coming from the canoe.

"Let the war-chief do as the Dead Chief shows him, and leave no trail," he said. Grasping the limb of the tree overhead, after strapping his rifle to his back, he

swung himself back and forth until he had gained sufficient momentum, when he released his grasp and dropped over the bank into the water in a place where it was not more than two feet deep. Floyd followed his example, and then the Indian waded to the place where he had left his canoe and drew it from the bank into the stream, and pushed off a few yards until he could look up and down the stream for some distance. Satisfying himself that none of the Indians were in sight, he pushed in again.

"Come," he said. "Floyd would go to Vincennes, and the Dead Chief will show the way."

"I can not leave this spot," replied Will. "Go on and save yourself, Dead Chief. I must wait."

"What you wait for?" demanded the chief.

"My friend," replied Floyd.

"Speak his name in the ear of Dead Chief," said the Pottawatomie.

"He is known as the Long Man and the 'Yellow Hair.'"

"Ugh," said Dead Chief. "He is a good man and loves the Indians who are true to the American father at Vincennes. Listen: Dead Chief has a warm heart toward the Long Man, and will stay. Is he in the woods?"

"Yes."

"Good. One canoe is enough for us. Mine is best. Where is yours?"

Floyd drew it out from the cover, and the savage at once knocked a hole in the bottom and sent it out into the stream. It filled quickly and floated out of sight just as a hurried step was heard, and Yankee Seth came through the bushes, and looked down into the place where he had left the canoe.

"Will," he said, in a half-whisper.

"All right," said Will. "Here we are!"

The canoe closed in and Seth took his place hurriedly, casting a quick glance at the Indian to see who he was. He gave a low whistle of surprise.

"Ha!" he said. "That yew, Dead Chief? Thought yew'd gone under, sartin."

"The Dead Chief of the Pottawatomies does not die so easily."

"Push off, boys. Git intew the stream as soon as yew can. Thar's the all-fireddest pickle in this yer woods yew ever hern tell off. I knowed I was right. I knowed

the Prophet meant mischief all the time, and mebbe old man Harrison will believe it now. How did you come here, chief?"

The Indian explained how he had been overpowered by Elskwatawa and Willimack, and rescued by Floyd.

"Good enuff! We wanted a man with us that knows something of Injin tricks. Yew must understand, cap., that this chief hez stood up like a hero for our side, and Tecumseh hez given orders to kill him on sight. I thought it was done 'fore now."

The Indian shook his head proudly.

"Tecumseh has long arms, and I am dead if I fall into the hands of his men. What of that? Can he make a chief a dog? No. I will die as I have lived, a warrior true to our American father and his men."

The canoe was by this time in the midst of the current, floating slowly down, for they were not using the paddles.

"Push her up-stream, boys," said the Yankee. "Most of the devils is down below. They've got six canoes, and I guess thar ain't less than a hundred men in all. Cuss that Prophet! I wish I hed his skulp."

"It would gratify me immensely if you had," replied the young soldier. "And that scoundrel Willimack! There is no end to the benefits he has received from time to time from my father and myself; and yet, he would have killed us all to-night, if you had not foiled him."

"I will wear the scalp of Willimack in my girdle some day," said Dead Chief. "He is a dog. He cares nothing for either white man or Indian, if he can get blankets, powder and rifles. He has taken belts from both sides and hates them all. He talks with a forked tongue, like a snake. One tongue is for our white father at Vincennes, and the other for the red-coats. Tecumseh is a slave of Elliot, the red-coat agent."

Zip! Zip!

Two bullets cut through the air close to the canoe, one passing between the Indian and Floyd, and the other clipping a piece out of the stern, close to the immovable figure of Seth, who nodded smilingly.

"That means business," he said. "I knowed they'd hev somebody up here tew watch. They knowed we must go down-stream to git to Vincennes. Throw yourself, Dead Chief! Up-stream fer yure life."

The canoe seemed to leap into the air under the vigorous strokes of the Indian, and they quickly passed the point from which the shots had come.

Just beyond, a great forest swept down the water's edge on both sides, and the banks lay in shadow for a hundred feet on either side. Seth uttered some low order in the Indian language to Dead Chief, and he at once turned the bow of the canoe toward the shore, and they shot up under the dark bank in exactly such a place as the one in which the canoe had been concealed when the Yankee went out upon his scout. The forest seemed to be alive on every side of them, the furious shrieks of the Indians echoing and re-echoing among the huge old trees. Seth snatched a hatchet and knife and bounded up the bank, closely followed by the others. The cries told them that their enemies were about them on every hand, eager for their blood.

"Tree!" said Seth. "We can't afford tew show in an open canoe in the moonlight. Mout git hit, yew know! This way!"

He plunged into the woods, heading from the river, and ran for nearly a hundred yards before he stopped. Then selecting a tree of the right size, he mounted hastily. His example was followed by the others, and not a moment too soon, for the gathering cries told that the Indians were being guided to the spot where the canoe had been seen by those who had fired into it. The Yankee climbed to the crotch of the tree, selected a convenient place and sat down coolly, resting his feet upon the branch beneath. He felt tolerably safe, for, in the dark woods, trailing them was an impossibility. As the shouts came nearer he only grinned widely and threw back his head for a yawn, when, to his utter consternation, he saw a pair of gleaming eyes looking into his, not three feet away!

CHAPTER V.

IN A TREE-TOP.

THE Yankee looked hard at the gleaming orbs close to his own, and could just make out a dark body stretched along the limbs. He was far from liking the appearance of the affair. It might be an Indian, or it was just as likely to be a panther. If the latter, a struggle with him would bring the Indians upon him, whose footsteps already sounded along the bank. He loosened his knife in its sheath, though he well knew how powerless he would be in a tree-top, fighting

against an animal which could light like a feather upon a bending bough and leap to another with all the quickness of a cat.

"*Jehosaphat!*" he muttered. "What'n thunder will I do now? I guess I'm gobbled 'up this time, shure. I wish I had a pike, I dew. Thunder and lightning, this ain't pooty."

The dark object upon the limb did not move, and there was no time to be lost. Seth determined to know what it was at all hazards. Thrusting his hand into his pouch, he drew out a box of punk, struck a spark and ignited the whole piece. As the light flashed up he caught a glimpse of an Indian, extended at full length along the limb. Dropping the fire he hurled himself downward, falling upon the prostrate figure and clasped his long arms about its throat tightly, with his bony knuckles pressed hard against the windpipe. So quickly was it done that the Indian had only time to utter a smothered cry before his breath was stopped completely. The limb bent and swayed under the weight of the heavy bodies, and they began to slide downward. A fall of twenty feet was not what Seth wished for, but, locked in the embrace of the savage, he could not help himself unless he let go his hold upon the throat, and then the cries of the Indian would bring his friends to the rescue. They slid down, turned completely over once, and fell with a dull sound upon the moss-covered knoll at the foot of the tree, the Yankee uppermost. A fall from that distance would have been likely to shock the savage some, but add to that the avoirdupois of a man weighing as much as this Yankee, and the damage is likely to be greater. All the remaining breath of the Indian went out like the flame of an expiring lamp, and he lay senseless under the body of Spink, who was somewhat confused by the fall.

"Dead, I guess," he muttered. "Teach him to tree in *my* place, the darned heathen. Ugh!"

Picking up the senseless body he threw it over a log out of sight, and then, instead of returning to the tree, he crept cautiously back toward the river. The Indians were scattered along the banks, and, just as he peeped out, a loud whoop announced the discovery of the canoe.

"That'll bring 'em together," said he to himself. "I guess we'd better put out for camp."

He turned to go back, when, to his utter surprise, from every direction the savages bounded out upon him and clung to him like cats. At this moment the wonderful strength of the athlete showed itself. Stretching out his long arms, he dragged the Indians who clung to him on either side from their hold, and dashed them to the earth, and then, placing his back to a tree, he drew a knife and hatchet, and braining a Wyandot who rushed upon him incautiously, sent his

knife through the shoulder of another, while he planted his right foot with desperate force in the stomach of a third, doubling him up and sending him rolling to the earth with the life nearly kicked out of his body. At the same time he gave utterance to a terrific yell, which rung through the arches of the deep woods, rivaling the shouts of his assailants. With savage screams the Indians rushed at him from three sides, but those long arms and feet made deadly work among them, and though a dozen rushed at him together his desperate valor kept them all at bay.

There was a hearty shout and war-cry from the rear, and, the Dead Chief and Will Floyd rushed in, scattering the savages right and left. They reached the side of the Yankee, who was fighting with desperate zeal.

"Break for the canoe," he whispered, as he struck down an Indian. "It's your only chance."

Darting round the tree, and overthrowing the savages who barred their way, they reached the canoe, which still lay upon the shore. So sudden was the action that the Indians were stupefied, and the brave trio gained a rod or so in advance before their foes started in pursuit. They had gained the canoe, the Dead Chief and the Yankee were already in it, and Floyd was following, when he fell by a hatchet hurled at him by Willimack. Seth would have turned back to aid him, but the Dead Chief seized the paddle and pushed off quickly, just as the Indians pounced upon the fallen man. A score of them plunged into the water, each with a hatchet or knife in his teeth, but the quick strokes of the paddle soon left them far behind. A useless volley from those on shore followed.

"Poor lad," said Yankee Seth. "I'm afeard he's gone under."

"The young soldier is very brave," replied the chief. "If he is not dead, he will die like a man. And now, hear the words of the Dead Chief. I swear by the grave of my father, by the totem of my tribe, that I will not go back to the village where my squaw and papposes dwell, until the young war-chief is saved or I have avenged him. It is spoken; the Dead Chief can not lie."

"Good for yew, old man," said the Yankee. "I'm with yew threw thick an' thin. Thar's my hand on it. Shake."

The two woodmen clasped hands, while the canoe floated at will in the midst of the dark stream.

They lifted Floyd and dragged him up the bank into the bushes, where Willimack and Elskwatawa stood. He had been stunned at first by the stroke of the hatchet and was still dizzy and faint when he faced the chiefs. Their dark looks convinced him that he had little to hope from them. The death-wail was rising from the Indian band as they lifted the bodies of the fallen and laid them in a row along the bank. Four were dead, including the neighbor of the Yankee in the tree-top, and as many more desperately wounded. In such a *melée* as this, when a body of men assail a desperate athlete like the dreaded Long Man, some must get hurt. The cloud upon the face of the Prophet grew darker as, one by one, the dead were brought out, and Willimack uttered a snarl like a tiger as a man who had been his best friend was laid with the rest.

"It is finished then," thought Floyd. "They will revenge themselves upon me for the death of these men. I can only meet my fate like a man; but my poor father, my darling Madge! Oh, if the Skeleton Scout would but come now and scatter these fiendish knaves as he did at the stockade! I wonder if Yankee Seth or the chief were injured? Even if they are safe, what can they do against so many?"

At this moment the panther-call of which Seth had spoken came from the opposite bank of the stream. A faint hope came into the heart of the prisoner. The call was given to show that he was safe and would not desert him in the hour of need. Willimack advanced and looked in the face of Floyd with that vicious glance of triumph which small natures feel in the power they may gain over an enemy.

"Floyd," said he, "the white man can not have all his own way. To-night I was insulted in your wigwam—I, a chief of a great nation. I told you then that a chief never forgot, and that the day of revenge would come; behold it is here already!"

"Do not trouble me by too much talking, Willimack. I am in your power, it is true, but for all that you shall not force me to cringe to you, or to ask mercy at your hands."

"Waugh! Will you not beg for life from the Wyandot and Shawnee?"

"No."

"Listen. Was it you that cut the bonds which bound the Dead Chief to the tree?"

"It was."

"Good! That is another thing against you. Did you know that the Dead Chief was our prisoner?"

"Yes. That is the reason I set him free," replied Floyd, in an undaunted tone.

"It is well. You speak like a great brave, and had you lived would have been a great chief among the white men. But, the white men must cease from off the face of the Indian country. We love it too well to let the feet of bad men press it, and tread upon the earth where our fathers' bones are laid. The English are friends to us, and will not take our country; the Americans steal all."

"Do what you mean to do, and at once. I can bear any indignity you may heap upon me, as becomes a man."

Willimack stood aside, and the Prophet advanced. His dark face was working with passion, and he seemed to struggle to repress a desire to strike down the young soldier where he stood. His fingers clutched the handle of a hatchet convulsively, and now and then he half drew it from its sheath.

"Let Elskwatawa speak, for he is the great Prophet of the Shawnees. I see before me the dead of my tribe and one warrior of the Wyandots. They had hoped to live to fight many battles against the whites and again possess the land of their fathers. The Manitou came to me in a dream and told me that the time had come for the Indians to drive out the white dogs and take their own again. Therefore you see us in our war-paint to-day."

He paused and cast a wild glance about him which seemed to have a great effect upon the savages, and they uttered a wail of agony.

"But see," he cried. "They lie in their blood upon their own soil, and the man who killed them is in our hands."

A triumphant shout went up as he said this, and fierce looks were directed at the young soldier, who returned them by a glance of haughty defiance.

"The Indians deal justly by all," said the Prophet. "No man can die by their hands who is not worthy of death for some great wrong done to the nations. Warriors and chiefs, I have gone among the white men at Vincennes, and have spoken to the war-chief Harrison. The tears have flowed from my eyes when I spoke of the wrongs of my people; yes, my tears have fallen like rain. He is a man of iron, and I can not melt him. He cares not for us, but for his own people. You stood by, Willimack, when all the chiefs were seated and Tecumseh stood up like a child about to be punished. At last they saw how great an insult this was to the great chief. They offered him a chair; but the chief looked at them with scorn when they said, 'Your father offers you a seat!' 'My father?' he cried. 'The sun is my father and the earth is my mother. I will repose on her bosom.'^[1]

"The chief will bear no more. The battle must be fought and we will win again the lands of our fathers. We must not fail. The mortification of failure shall never be ours, and my great brother will not disgrace me by a mistake. I hear the warriors shout as they gather. I hear them in the South and East, in the North and West, with a sound like the summer leaves rising and rustling in the breeze. I hear their tread upon the mountains, by the silent rivers and in the green valleys. It is well. Shall Tecumseh tremble and shall Elskwatawa fail? No! The mountains and plains the Great Spirit gave us are around us, behind and before.

"I too have my warriors; and here, on the Wabash, on the Scioto, and on the broad waters of the North, my voice shall be heard for war."

He ceased for a moment, and cast a sad glance upon the bodies on the ground.

"There be our brothers, who had thought to take a part in this great battle to come. Their eyes are closed, their voices are not heard, their lips are pale, their ears hear no sound. What is this I see upon their faces? It is blood, the blood of the white man's shedding. And now, I think I hear a voice, speaking from the dead lips, and it says, 'Avenge me on my foes! My blood has been shed, and I can not cross the dark river until I smell the blood of one of the accursed race.'"

His eyes again fell upon Floyd, and fire seemed to flash from their depths.

"Who is this I see before me? His hands are red with blood. It is the blood of Negarish and Monado, of Cartain and Zeman. My brothers, let us light a fire and burn this white man, and then the souls of my brothers shall find rest and peace."

A wild cry arose from the assembled band, and they began to collect dried leaves and sticks from the surrounding woods, and pile them about the limbs of young Floyd after they had tied him to a tree. The pile rose until it reached nearly to his shoulders, and he felt that his last hour had come. He was brave enough to meet his fate, but it was agony to him to know that, when the flames had consumed his body, there would be no one left to protect his father, and Madge, whom he had hoped to make his wife when the autumn leaves were yellowing in the sun. He began to suspect that when he was gone, Willimack would go back and storm the stockade. What then would be the fate of his father and that sweet girl he could not think. Madge was brave, he knew, but, would she have strength enough, when the hour of her great peril came, to save herself from dishonor with her own hand?

"Stand back," said Willimack. "Let the voice of a chief speak terror to the ears of his enemy before he dies. I am Willimack, chief of the Wyandot, and I am ashamed to be at the death of a child. I see water in your eyes, and I know you

are weeping in your heart. You fear the pain which will come when the flames curl and the smoke rolls about you. Let the chief of the Wyandots speak. You know that you refused me the shelter of your dwelling when I came to it. The yellow-haired hunter struck me down and bound me, but I saw that the Bright Eyes looked sadly upon the disgrace of a chief. Good; the Bright Eyes shall make the fire bright in the lodge of Willimack."

Bright Eyes was the Indian name given to Madge by those who, from time to time, visited the cabin of the Floyds.

"Oh, red hound!" shrieked Floyd. "Oh, if I had dreamed half the villainy you had in your black heart, I would have killed you as you sat by my fire."

"The heart of a chief is not open to the eyes of a dull pale-face," replied Willimack, scornfully. "The Bright Eyes is very beautiful. Her voice is like the song of the birds when the summer sun is high. Floyd would have made a nest for her that she should sing for him alone; but Willimack laughs, for he knows that she can only sing in his lodge."

Floyd struggled manfully to break his bonds, glaring furiously at the savage who knelt at his feet, and, striking a flint and steel, began to kindle the flame. It burned slowly, for the leaves were damp. Again and again it smoldered and went out, but the Indian persevered until a little jet of flame leaped up. This he fed, leaf after leaf, until he had a little fire burning, apart from the pile, about the person of the young soldier. He took savage delight in prolonging the scene, and the Indians, understanding his motive, yelled in concert and danced wildly about the tree.

Willimack now took up a lighted brand, and with it touched the person of the prisoner in various places, laughing in demoniac glee when he shrunk from the contact. Others took the hint and followed the same amusement for some time, the young man bearing it bravely. They at length lit the pile, and the flames began to creep up about his person, and a thick smoke arose. He was dimly able to see through the smoke and flame, that the Indians were dancing and shouting all around, when a new cry arose, and he saw the Indians break and run in every direction, evidently in the greatest dread. Then the figure of the being known as the Skeleton Scout bounded into the open space. Seeing him closely, the young man could conceive of nothing more horrible than the ghastly head, blazing

eyes, and tremendous hight of this strange being. "Oonah! Oonah!" was the cry of the Indians as they fled, and the next moment the brands were scattered and the young man was free!

"Stand here until you hear the loon-cry, and then make for the river, where your friends are waiting. Remember the Skeleton Scout!"

FOOTNOTES:

[1] A fact.

CHAPTER VI.

A YANKEE RUSE.

THE strange apparition was gone, and the next moment the loon-call sounded from the depths of the woods, mingled with cries which seemed to burst from a hundred throats. The young soldier bounded across the open space, and ran at his best speed toward the place where he had left the boat. Suddenly, without warning, two dark figures started up in his path and seized him, and he thought himself again in the hands of his enemies, when he heard one of his captors say, in a nasal tone not to be mistaken: "This yew, capting?" He had fallen into the hands of his friends!

"All right, Seth," he answered. "Get back to the canoe as quick as you can. The woods are alive with savages."

The Dead Chief led the way, and in a moment they were again in the canoe, and pushed off from the shore. The moon had gone down, and a darkness like Egypt had fallen on the river. The Dead Chief had taken the paddle, and, under the strokes of his vigorous arm, the light craft was shooting down the stream. The Pottawatomie knew his course well, and how much danger lay before them. Not a word was spoken, for they knew the virtue of silence. They must break through the cordon of their enemies at any and every hazard. On they went, the shadows dark about them, each grasping a weapon, and ready to defend himself to the utmost if attacked. They knew that by far the greater portion of the wild band had gathered about the death-fire, and yet they were certain that the Prophet was too able a warrior to leave the path to Vincennes clear.

"Back her a minnit, chief," whispered the Yankee. "I want tew speak tew the young 'un here."

By the skillful use of his paddle the chief managed to keep the canoe nearly stationary in the midst of the stream, while Seth bent forward and whispered to his young companion:

"Yew got away; heow did yew dew it?"

"By aid of the Skeleton Scout," replied Floyd, in the same tone. "Whatever he may be, he is at least a friend to us."

"He never hunts nothing but Injins, *he* don't," said the Long Man. "Clever of him tew help yew, anyheow. Was they going to scorch yew?"

"The fire was lit already," replied the young soldier. "Ugh! my throat is dry by even thinking of it."

"A close shave!" chuckled the Yankee. "That Skeleton Scout is a darned nice ghost, by gracious. How many Injins below, think?"

"Seventy or eighty danced around me at the stake."

"Pooty dancers?"

"Can't say I appreciated their efforts."

"No? that's queer! Let her go on, chief. The men we've got tew tackle are waiting for us in the *mash* (marsh). Git yure weepens ready, 'cause we are 'most thar."

Again the canoe glided softly down the stream, until it struck the marsh of which he spoke. It was a level bottom, where the soft soil had drifted down and been left, leaving scarcely room in places for a canoe to cross without grounding on the soft bottom. In this soil gigantic rushes had grown up, as we see them in our creeks when duck-hunting. These rushes rose above the water, to the hight of eight or ten feet, and stood so thickly together that, unless a man was well acquainted with them it would be impossible to force a canoe through. Of course there was a channel running through the marsh, but it was more than likely that the patrol canoes of the Indians occupied this water-course, and it would not be an easy task to get down, facing their weapons. The Dead Chief seized one of the rushes and held the canoe, and all bent forward to listen. Not a sound was heard except the sighing of the long blades as the wind rustled through them. If the Indians were watching, they knew enough to keep silent, and, for all the environed men knew, their foes might be lying within twenty feet of them.

The Dead Chief was acquainted with all the passes through the marsh, and had not for a moment thought of forcing a path through the reeds. The rustling they must of necessity make would apprise the lurking Indians of their vicinity, and

put them on their guard. They were rather ready to trust to their woodcraft on shore, but they would have liked to find the exact position of the canoes of their enemies, before striking for the shore. But, though listening carefully, they could hear nothing of the red-skins, and determined to try the land.

The head of the canoe was pushed into a little channel which the Dead Chief knew ran close to the bank, at a good place to land. This was accomplished without a rustle, and Floyd leaped with the chief to the shore, closely followed by his Yankee friend. The canoe was left as of no further use to them, and pushed into the rushes out of sight. This done, the Dead Chief sat down on the bank, and drew his moccasins from his feet, and made Floyd understand by the sense of touch that he was to take off his boots, and put on these. Will hesitated to make the Indian go barefooted through the woods, but the Dead Chief took his hand and pressed it upon the sole of the bare foot. The moment his hand came in contact with the hard and callous foot, he understood that the Indian had a protection there which made a moccasin rather an object of ornament than use. He offered no further objection, but drawing off his boots, he left them on the bank, and put on the moccasins. He understood that the Indian thought the boot a poor thing for a scout to wear. The moment he was ready, the chief again took the lead, bending his body low, and keeping one hand on the ground, carefully removing every obstruction from the path which the less experienced soldier might step on.

Floyd followed, imitating his attitude, and betraying at once a keen sense of woodcraft, and the attributes of a scout. Not a stick cracked, not a twig bent. The Yankee who followed him was surprised at the celerity of his motions, and the quiet way in which he performed his part. Their course led directly away from the river, for they knew that they must make a wide circuit to get away from the Indians, who had doubtless lined the shore with scouts. It was only the extreme darkness of the night, since the moon had gone down, which had allowed them to pass the sentries unperceived. Seth had no doubt that, favored by the darkness, they already had passed one of the guard canoes, but there were two more. One was probably in the center of the marsh around which they were now describing a circle, and the other further down, though where it was, they could not say. Once out of reach of the river by half a mile, the Yankee gave a signal to the chief to wait, and they sat down together in the darkness.

"By jinks," he chuckled. "Had a right nice time of it so fur. I ain't enjoyed myself so mighty well this year. The pizon critters didn't sort o' kalkilate on finding us so foxy, did they? I hev all I ken dew tew keep from laffing rite eout when I

think heow I walked intew them cussed thieves arter I tumbled eout of the tree with that ornery critter that *would* hev that pertickler tree."

"I should think you would be afraid to talk so loud while we remain in danger," said Will Floyd.

"Ain't no danger here, Lord love yew!" replied the volatile scout. "It's glorious work fighting these cussid thieves! Now, look here; thar's lots of good Injins in this created airth, but thar's a pizon heap of bad 'uns. There's my friend, Dead Chief, now; he's what I call a good Injin. And if you raally want a mighty bad specimen, yew jest take up Willimack or the Profit."

"That scoundrel Willimack threatened our family while I was tied to the stake. Do not let us dally a moment, my friend. Think of them I have left in danger—my old father and my darling Madge. He insulted her, most of all, for he designed for her a fate worse than death—a place in his lodge."

"He duz! Now look at me, yew. I'll never stop hunting that pesky critter until I've got his skulp or he's got mine. Take that pooty gal into his lodge, will he? Wants her for a squaw, duz he? Yew jest wait! He won't live to see it, bet yure life he won't! I'm so cussid mad I could hop rite over that tree-top. Oh, holy fly! Hold me, somebody, or I'll go charging back rite intew them Injins, and cut and slash and hack and hew. Oh, bu'st me all to pieces! Take my hat and stamp on it, somebody, I'm so *darned* mad. Litening strike me intew a blind nigger ef I ain't growed nigh a fool sense yew told me that. Come, let's git along. Ef old man Harrison don't rair rite up on his hind feet when I tell him this, then thar ain't no buffler on the prahary; not a darned buffler."

The party kept out from the river for a quarter of an hour, and then inclined again toward the stream. The Dead Chief still kept the lead, but all at once he stopped and dropped to the earth as suddenly as if he had received a ball in his bosom. The others followed his example and listened, and understood what it was which caused this hasty movement. It was the sound of human voices, just below them. The bank at this point was rather high, and crawling on their hands and knees to the edge of the bluff they looked down. The Indians who held this last guard-boat evidently were not trained warriors, for they had built a fire and were cooking some meat. To be sure, their fire was built in a sheltered nook and could not be seen from the river, but would have called down upon their heads the wrath of the Prophet, if he had known of it.

There they sat, six stalwart young warriors, grouped in various attitudes of ease and comfort about the fire, gnawing the flesh from the bones of a young buck

which one of their number had brought down by a well-directed arrow. The flame lighted up their bronzed figures and dark faces, and danced upon their waving plumes and beaded belts and moccasins. They were chatting in low tones over their feast, it being evident that they did not think it possible that the two whites—for they knew nothing of the Dead Chief—could escape from the hands of their companions above. But they had not reckoned upon the fertility of resource possessed by the Yankee scout. Long Seth touched his companions lightly, and they drew back cautiously at least a hundred yards from the dangerous vicinity, where they could converse with ease and not be heard by the Indians below.

"Ain't got much time tew talk 'bout it," said the Yankee. "What do yew say? Thar's six Injins, red with white blood. Shall we give 'em goss or not? If we lick 'em—I'd ingage tew lick the hull bilin' myself—we kin git the canoe tew ride tew Vincennes, and I'd ruther ride than walk, any time."

"I'm for thinning this band as much as we can," said Floyd. "There will not be so many to attack my father's stockade."

"Dead Chief is ready," said the Pottawatomie, in his short way.

"Good enuff!" replied Seth. "Waal, I'll creep down the bank below 'em and come up on the back. You two creep up in front, and jest ez soon as I give my loon-call, yew pick eout two of 'em and knock 'em over. Pick eout the biggest, they ginerally fight the best. I'll give a good account of number three, and then charge 'em like smoke. Them's the sentiments I express upon this momentous occasion. Now for it."

They separated, the chief and Floyd creeping cautiously to the front and making their weapons ready for a shot, and the Yankee moving away rapidly but silently to the left. After allowing five minutes to pass, they heard the loon-call on the river.

Lifting their rifles, each sighted a man and pulled trigger. Down went two of the savages, one shot through the brain and the other through the breast, and with a hearty border shout they grasped their smaller weapons and darted down the bank just as the weapon of Long Seth spoke and a third Indian uttered his death-cry. At the same time the Yankee appeared, and the three closed in upon their enemies, who, like rats in a trap, turned and fought like men.

Singling out an adversary, the determined whites rushed on. Dashing down the weak defense of his adversary, Seth struck him with his fist a blow which seemed to shatter his jaws, for the bones absolutely rattled as he went down.

"Take that, you red devil," he hissed, turning to seek a new foe. But, the struggle was already at an end. The Dead Chief had hurled his hatchet at his antagonist with the skill which only long practice in the use of that weapon can give, and he rolled to the earth, the bright bowl of the keen ax only showing through his skull. Will Floyd, at the expense of a slight flesh-wound in the arm, had buried his dagger in the breast of his own antagonist, and the struggle was over.

Seth knew that no time was to be lost, and darted for the canoe, though for what purpose the chief remained behind the young soldier could guess. When he joined them in the canoe he touched the soldier on the arm and offered him two bloody scalps.

"No, no," said Floyd, pushing back his hand. "I can not take them."

"Two for you, Long Man," said the chief, offering the others to the Yankee.

"I didn't hev time tew wait for 'em," replied Seth, coolly, taking the bloody trophies and thrusting them into his belt. "Thank yew all the same, chief. I reckon yew ain't used tew this sort of thing, cap.?"

"I confess I am not."

"Yew'll git over that. Climb intew the canoe and git hold of a paddle. I reckon we'll hev a hard time of it yit. I hear them devils up above coming down the rushes; hark! Du yew hear that?"

They listened and could hear the dip of paddles upon the river below. They had been mistaken in the number of their enemies after all, it seemed, and they had yet another patrol canoe below the rushes!

"Load up yure rifles, boys, and yew give the pistils fodder if they ain't full already, Will. This old thief, the Profit, meant business when he pitched on us. If we git threw it won't be for lack of head-work."

For some moments nothing was heard but the sound of preparation, as they loaded their weapons. Then the canoe, which was a large one, shot out into the stream, and Spink, who sat in the stern, caught up a heavy stone which lay on the bank and laid it in the bottom of the canoe, close to his feet. "Yew needn't mind the paddle jist yit, Will. Let the chief keep her stiddy, and put her rite on tew the other canoe, old man! I'll fix these heathen, yit."

The canoe was now only a few rods in advance, coming up under the full sweep of the paddles in the hands of half a dozen strong men. The morning was coming fast, but it was still too dark to distinguish faces.

"Put her straight for 'em," said Seth. "*I'll* show 'em a trick."

As the two canoes neared each other, the Dead Chief shouted to the coming savages in the Indian tongue:

"Who comes?"

"Brothers," replied the voice of the warrior in command. "Have the white dogs been taken?"

"Who can escape the snares of the Prophet?" replied the Dead Chief.

"Are they dead?" demanded the warrior.

"Why should we kill them?" replied the Dead Chief. "Come back and we will see them burn by the same fire."

The canoes were now side by side, and the Indians were trying to peer through the gloom of the morning to make out the figures in the other craft, when Seth rose suddenly, and, uttering a wild cry, dashed the huge stone through their canoe's bottom, tearing a great hole, through which the water rushed in a torrent, and in a moment the Indians were floundering in the water, while the other canoe, impelled by the strong arms of Floyd and Dead Chief, passed on down the river. In spite of the toils which the Prophet had set about them, his prey had escaped.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AMBUSCADE.

VINCENNES, on the Wabash, was the seat of government chosen by Harrison, as Governor of that territory. Here he was gradually collecting his forces for the coming struggle which he was assured must come, with the Indians under the control of Tecumseh and the Prophet. In the mean time his spies were everywhere gathering such information as they could of the position and designs of the enemy. In choosing these men, Harrison showed great knowledge of the Indian character, and for this reason his most trusted scouts were from that class of bordermen who, trained in border warfare, had also suffered loss at their hands. These he sent into the Indian country upon all sorts of pretenses, to collect information for future use.

Thus he learned who were lukewarm in the British cause, and therefore might be won over to the Americans.

Thus, when the struggle commenced, he knew upon whom to depend, and what he had against him. The Governor was at his own private residence when informed that the Pottawatomie, Dead Chief, and his companions, Captain Floyd and Long Seth Spink, desired to speak with him. He at once ordered them to his presence. Floyd was admitted first, and found the Governor seated at a small table, covered with papers and maps.

"Ah, captain," he said, "I am pleased to see you, although your leave of absence has not yet expired. I don't see what brought you here ahead of your time. You surely can not have had a quarrel with Miss Madge?"

"No, your excellency. Far from that, but the family are in great danger."

"Ha! In what way?"

"The Indians are on the war-path."

Harrison started up eagerly. "By heaven, I thought so. Who are their leaders?"

"The Prophet and Willimack are with the party we met."

"Give an account of the affair in few words."

Floyd commenced with his meeting with the Yankee in the morning, and the attempt of Willimack to enter the stockade, and told the story up to their entrance into the town.

"Then there is not a moment to be lost. Take out your company of the rangers and as many more as you need, and march up the river to the stockade. How far do you call it?"

"About twenty miles."

"Very good. Get your men under arms. Take the Dead Chief with you as a guide, and I will let this man Spink go also. You may send him to me at once."

"The Dead Chief?"

"Seth Spink."

"Oh; do you know him, then?"

"I have heard of him," replied Harrison, with a slight smile. "This action on the part of Willimack is premature, it is evident, and I am certain that the Prophet is not pleased with it, nor do I think Tecumseh knows any thing about it. Send

Spink to me."

Floyd went out into the next room, but the Governor followed him to the door, and, speaking with marked kindness to the Dead Chief, told him to go with the captain as guide. Then beckoning to the scout, he again entered the room. The Yankee followed him, closing the door after him. They remained closeted in the room for more than an hour, when the scout came out with a hurried step, and went down to the river-side, where the company of Will Floyd, consisting of nearly a hundred men, were under arms.

"Ha, Spink, my good fellow, hurry up," shouted the captain. "Death, man, do you not see that I am impatient?"

"No use to hurry now, cap," replied Seth. "My father died in a hurry. Ef he'd taken time tew think about it he needn't hev died at all. But, he got it intew his head he couldn't live, and so he went off without thinking. He won't dew that ag'in."

"Is this a time for jesting, sir?" said the captain, angrily. "Take your place. Fall in, men. By fours; trot!"

They set off at a rapid pace, and rode along the river-side beneath the bending branches, heavy with the morning dew. The birds sung in the laden branches, as if a thought of blood or battle never could or would disturb their grand old woods. But, the heart of young Floyd was heavy, for he feared that Willimack would make good his threat of the night before, and attack the stockade before his return. The men shared his fears, and a shade of doubt once or twice crossed the face of the Yankee, but he kept up a good heart, singing snatches of old songs now and then in a quaint way, which caused a smile among the ranks. But, before they had gone five miles his mood changed, and he began to glance quickly from side to side as if expecting an enemy. On they went through the oak openings until the woods began to thicken, when the Yankee bent in his saddle, and whispered in the ear of the captain.

"No, no," said Floyd, testily. "They have retreated, I tell you. They will not risk an encounter now."

"But I think I'm right, fer all that, cap."

"It is impossible. You do not know my rangers, or you would not think the Indians capable of resisting our march."

"I don't believe that the Prophet would fire a gun at a white man, dew yew?" said the Yankee, with a quizzical look. "Cum mi'ty nigh scorching yure legs last

night, though."

"He is capable of any small villainy like that," replied the captain. "But, he certainly is too able a warrior to commence before his plans are ripe."

"It's forced upon him, cap. He knows that we've got clear, and that both yew and the Dead Chief are aware of his hostility, so he can't wait. You'd better ride a leetle grain more keerful."

"Nonsense."

"I ain't used tew being talked tew that way, cap. I'm a strange critter, yew know. I dunno heow it is, but I've got a sort of sneaking notion I know something 'bout Injin fi'tin'. Come; order the men tew pull in, and don't make quite so much noise in the ranks."

"You take a great deal upon yourself, friend Spink," said Floyd, with a light laugh. "Perhaps you had better lead the company yourself, as you seem inclined to take command."

"See what it is tew be young," muttered the Yankee, with an appearance of great vexation. "Yew'll force me tew dew something I don't want tew, cap. Now, look here; yew ain't going tew ride intew yonder narrow path, are yew, without sending out scouts?"

"What would you have me do, sir? You know as well as I do that it makes the road three miles longer to keep in the oak openings."

"S'pose it duz? Yew don't want to lose half these nice-looking boys, dew yew? Come; take good advice, and don't go threw them woods."

"I will ride directly forward without turning out of my course for a mere scarecrow cry from you."

A dark frown crossed the face of the Yankee, and he pulled hard on his bridle and left the ranks.

"Go on then, if yew will. Bet yew forty dollars yew don't go fur."

With an angry exclamation Floyd put spurs to his horse, and calling to his men to follow, dashed into the woods. Scarcely had he done so when there was a rattling volley of musketry, and several saddles were emptied, while high and wild above the rattle of the small-arms, rose the gathering cry of the forest banditti. Dark forms glided from bush to bush, and the young captain saw his error. Entangled in the thick woods they must have been lost, but for his prompt

action. Snatching a bugle from the hand of a musician, he sounded the call to fall back, and, taking their wounded comrades—for the rangers would not leave them—they hastily retreated, and sheltered themselves behind the bushes in front of the woods and looked after their wounded comrades. Some of the savages showed themselves for a moment, but a volley from the rifles of the rangers quickly drove them back, and they waited for a new advance on the part of the horsemen.

Floyd cast a sidelong glance for the Yankee, but he was gone. In the *melée* he had taken his horse and slipped away, no one knew whither. Angry with himself for his error, Floyd sent the wounded men back to the village and buried the single dead man in the path, riding over it with the rangers several times so that the Indians could not find and mutilate the body. This done he took a wide *detour*, leaving the woods on his right, and set off at the best rate of speed for his home. Three miles on the way they met the Yankee coming back with a look of sorrow on his face.

"I couldn't wait tew see it, cap.," he said. "How many of the boys went under?"

"One," replied the captain, sorrowfully. "You were right, Seth. I ought to have kept out of that trap. I know it now, but, that will not atone for my folly. But, think what I feel now when I tell you that it would be a kindness in you to shoot me through the head."

"No," replied Seth, slowly. "I don't think that would pay us, principally because we kain't afford tew lose yew, and yew'll take advice next time. I've been out scouting a little in advance. Ride a little to the front and I'll tell yew what I've found eout."

They quickened their pace, and the Yankee bent in his saddle and said in a low voice: "Willimack hez been over the road since last night."

Floyd started violently, and his face grew pale. "How do you know that?" he cried.

"I kan read Injin sign," answered the Yankee, calmly. "Thar's another thing. I believe the critter they call the Skeleton Scout is arter Willimack."

"Why?"

"'Cause I've seen his sign. Ef he's a ghost, then he's a mighty heavy one. Why, he's got a foot bigger'n mine, ef I kin judge by his trail. Now mind, I don't say he's a human; sartin he don't act like one; but yew bet all yew'r worth he don't like Willimack, or heow in natur' would he chase *him* up the way he did last

night."

"But my father; my dearest Madge!" moaned the unhappy young man. "Oh, why did I ever leave you?"

"'Twould only hev been tew more sculps ef we had been thar," replied the Yankee. "Now, I'll tell yew what I think. Willimack turned back with his own warriors arter the Skileton Scout set you free, and put out fer the stockade."

"I am afraid you are right. Let us press on as quickly as we can."

"No use of that. If he did turn back, and I'm pesky 'fraid he did, all we kan do won't bring us thar in time. I'm afeard the old man didn't half understand his danger, nuther, and was keerless arter we went away. Here, order yure men to close up. Them Injins are behind us now, but I reckon they won't leave a stick or stone standing along the Wabash, now that their blood is up."

The rangers closed up. They quickened their pace, and, late in the afternoon, began to near the clearing in which the settler had built his house and stockade. As they entered the clearing, a heavy smoke was seen to rise toward the summer sky, and, uttering a cry of agony, the young soldier spurred quickly forward, to see what he had most feared and yet had hardly dared to hope had not happened—his father's house in ruins, and still smoking, though the flames had nearly gone out! It was a terrible scene of desolation, but one all too common in the history of these Indian wars.

The rangers surrounded the blackened walls. In some places the fire had lost its power over the walls from their green state, and they still stood, though blackened and half consumed. The house itself had fallen, and the charred rafters lay among the smoldering embers of that once happy home. The desolation did not stop here, for there, in the opening between the stockade and the house, lay the bodies of the two soldiers, who had been killed and scalped and horribly mutilated.

"Poor Lefebre! unhappy Forbes!" said the young soldier. "Yours was indeed a sad, sad fate. God in his mercy take you in his keeping! But, where is my father?"

They searched here and there, and, at length, half hidden by a heavy beam which had fallen upon their lifeless bodies, they found the murdered forms of the three negroes, like the soldiers, scalped and gory. All the indignities which savage ferocity could invent had been heaped upon the wretched men who had here met their fate. Floyd was ghastly pale, and reeled in his walk like a drunken man as

the five bodies were drawn out into the open space and laid down, side by side. One of the soldiers dismounted, and, taking his blanket from his saddle, and begging another from a comrade, covered the lifeless forms from the public gaze. The Yankee, whose face seemed twitching convulsively, looked fiercely about him as each new exhibition of savage spite showed itself.

"Why don't you help me, Seth?" said Floyd, feebly.

"I *don't* know. I'm sartin of one thing, and that is that Miss Madge would kill herself if she could to keep herself out of the hands of them pizen critters. It's awful, awful! Move round, boys, and look fer the capt'in's father. Be alive, men, and don't look so scared. I don't blame yew, poor lads, when tew of yure comrades are gone. And then, them black boys and the old lady. Here, take hold of these rafters and throw 'em off. Mebbe the old gentleman is underneath."

They tossed aside the still smoldering rafters and yet found nothing. The floor was only partly burned. The Yankee threw off a trap-door which had led into the cellar, and looked down. He could see nothing as yet, for a mass of dense smoke was rolling slowly upward from the cellar and he stood aside until this passed off, and then descended.

"Hurry!" he cried, at length. "I've got somebody. Two of you boys come down."

Down two of the rangers leaped, and in a few moments' time reappeared, bearing a body to the surface. It was found to be that of an Indian, who evidently had been killed by a pistol bullet. The rangers kicked the senseless form to one side just as the face of Seth appeared at the opening.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It's a cussed Injin," answered one of the rangers.

"Darn him," roared Seth. "Raise his ha'r, some of yew, while I go down ag'in. I'm sartin I'll find somebody down here."

He disappeared again. By this time the smoke had passed out and he could see plainly. Upon the cellar floor was a track of blood, which led into the large drain in the corner. Following this trace, the Yankee stooped and saw that the feet of a man were just within the drain. He seized upon the feet and drew him out, and showed the bloody form of Mr. Floyd, senseless from a hatchet wound in the head, but breathing heavily, like one in a trance.

CHAPTER VIII.

TECUMSEH.

THE body of the wounded man was carefully borne to the surface, and the young soldier, with a cry like a wolf seizing his young, lifted the beloved form in his arms, carried it out of the stockade and laid it upon the grass outside. The old man breathed heavily, and Floyd looked up with hope imprinted on every line of his young face. But, the Yankee was downcast in expression, and stood leaning against the wall of the stockade, at times striking his hand against it.

"Bring water, boys," cried Floyd, anxiously. "Water, water."

Two of the men hurried down to the spring with their canteens and brought them up full. The captain took one of these and washed the ghastly wound upon the skull and showed that it was fractured.

"Oh, heaven," cried the son. "My father, my dear father. Was it for this that I left you last night, to find you here, murdered by the hand of brutal savages? But he lives; you can see that, Seth. A little care might save him."

"Oh, he'll *live* fast enough," said Seth, gloomily. "It isn't that. I've seen that kind of a hurt afore and they ain't no good. Let me see what I can do, and while I am doing it, yew go and look arter the gal."

Floyd started up eagerly and hurried away, while the Yankee kneeled at the side of the wounded man, and looked at the wound, shaking his head. "'Twill be a pity for him if he does live, poor man," he muttered. "In course he'll be crazy while the bone presses down into the brain that way. Poor old man; I'd do any thing to save him, but I daren't touch that wound. It looks a little tew bad fur me to handle. Thar; he's coming round."

As he spoke, the eyes of the old man opened slowly and he stared vaguely about him like one in a dream. Seth tapped his forehead significantly and pointed at him, and the men understood. "Cracked," muttered the scout. "I know'd how it would be. Thar, old man. How dew yew feel?"

"Why don't you stop that horrible noise there?" demanded Floyd, angrily. "I won't have it in my house, you know. Silence, and listen to my orders at once."

"That's right, captaing. If any of them refuse to obey, you'd better order him forty lashes."

"What does he grin at me for?" cried the wounded man, starting to his feet.

"What does he mean by it? Does he know that I am master here?"

"Of course he does," replied the Yankee, quietly. "He won't be quiet unless he gets forty lashes, I'm afraid."

"I don't know what's the matter with my head," said the old man, gravely, putting his hand up. "Didn't I fall somewhere?"

"Oh, yes," replied Seth. "You fell into the cellar. Don't you remember?"

"I believe you are right," said the captain, looking fixedly at the blood upon his hand. "Look at this now; my hand is exactly the color of a fellow I had some trouble with this morning, and I was forced to shoot him. I didn't like to do it, but I had to. Then I fell down and hurt my head, and it feels rather light."

"Yes, that fellow won't trouble you any more. Here is your son coming. Don't let him know that yure head is light or it will make him feel badly."

"He looks like a boy of mine," replied the demented man, looking at his son, who was approaching rapidly, overjoyed at seeing his father on his feet, although he had found no trace of his affianced. He ran to his father and took his hand eagerly.

"My dear father, you can not tell how overjoyed I am to find you so little injured."

"There, there," cried his father, pushing him back with his left hand. "I think you are getting too familiar."

"Father!"

"I allow no liberties taken with me, young man. I killed a red fellow this morning for this. By the way, do you know that I would like to get very drunk to-day in honor of the conjunction of the planets in their separate orbits? Venus is a particular friend of mine. I met her at a ball. No—where did I meet her? Where did you get that hat?"

"Seth, what does this mean? I do not understand this. Why does he act so strangely?"

"That is the funniest hat, as I'm alive," said the old man, laughing. "Why will you wear such an absurd thing, young man? I wish you would take pattern by me."

"Father, where is Madge?"

"Madge? Who is Madge? Oh yes, I know. A little rosy-cheeked creature that used to live here, on sufferance, mind you! Well, a red fellow came along yesterday—was it yesterday?—I don't remember exactly—and I gave her to him. She was no manner of use to me, so I thought I might as well part with her, as the red fellow really seemed to want her."

A look of agony came into the face of the young man. "This is horrible. He demented and can give us no information in regard to my dear Madge. What shall we do?"

"He must be sent down the river at once, for a doctor is what he wants. But, I don't see how it can be done. The woods are full of Indians."

"Let the Dead Chief speak," said the Pottawatomie, advancing. "Let me take him to my lodge, and the young war-chief can bring the medicine-man to my lodge. The Gray Hair would not live to go to Vincennes."

"I believe the chief is right," said Floyd. "Oh, my poor father, how it grieves me that you should be reduced to this piteous state."

"I would like to know what all this talk is about," said the old man. "I don't understand you at all. What does this man want?"

"Come and dwell in the wigwam of the Dead Chief," said the Pottawatomie.

"I really feel obliged to you, but I have so much business."

"You may make a good trade if you go there," said Floyd, though it made his heart ache to aid in deceiving his father. "We think you ought not to have given Madge to that red fellow you speak of. Which way did he take her?"

"How should I know? I fell into the cellar before she went away, and hurt my head. Well, if he cheated me, then the bargain is off. I'll go with this other red fellow and see about it."

They found a canoe at the landing, put him in it, and, with the chief and two of the dragoons for a guard, he set off up the river, while his son, affected almost to tears by his melancholy state, stood upon the bank watching him until he disappeared around a bend in the river. As he turned away they heard an ominous sound among the men, and the click of pistol-locks, as an Indian came out of the woods and advanced into their midst. A man of large size, with a lofty and commanding appearance, richly dressed for an Indian, and wearing a wampum-belt which denoted a chief of great rank. Half a dozen pistols were leveled, knives were half drawn from their sheaths, and the threatening murmur

was deepening, when Yankee Seth threw himself between the weapons and the chief.

"What yew going tew dew? Don't yew know the great sachem? It is *Tecumseh!*"

"TECUMSEH!"

The leveled weapons were dropped in an instant, and every one looked at the commanding figure of the chief, as he gazed in evident surprise at their hostile attitude.

"What is this?" he cried. "Do they level their weapons against the heart of so great a chief as Tecumseh when he comes to them with open hands?"

A louder murmur rose as the rangers pressed in upon him. "He is the chief." "No, no, do not harm Tecumseh." "He knows all about this villainy, and at least can punish the red devils who did it."

In the midst of all the chief stood firm, his eyes fixed upon the swaying mass of the rangers, flashing angrily at their attitude toward him. Once or twice his hand strayed to the hilt of a weapon, and he half drew it from its sheath, but the Yankee threw forward his rifle.

"Neow, see here, men. I'm a plain sort of feller, and I talk plain tew. Look eout what yew dew, fur, as sure as yew take a step tew hurt the chief, yew git me in yure ha'r! He cum among us in good faith, and by vum he shall go away safe."

"Down with your guns, men! What one among you has suffered greater wrong at the hands of the Indians than I have? The chief is innocent of all this bloodshed, I fully believe. Tecumseh, you have come among us in a bad time. Do you see yonder smoking ruins, and can you tell whose hands did the fatal deed? I warn you that I am not in a good temper to-day, but for all that I would not see wrong done you."

"The heart of Tecumseh is very sad," said the chief, laying his hand upon his broad breast, "for he sees the desolation about the home of his brother. Who has done this?"

"The men of Elskwatawa, led by Willimack the Wyandot," replied the young soldier. "Stand fast, men. Chief, come with me."

He led Tecumseh to the place where the bodies lay beneath the blankets, and

throwing back the cloth from them, showed the gashed and gory faces of the dead. Tecumseh started back in evident surprise, not unmixed with anger.

"Listen, Floyd. Tecumthè^[2] is above a lie. If by my hand these men were slain, or y my orders, I would not lie to save my life. If my brother's hand has done this deed, he is to blame, and is not the power among the tribes I thought him. Where is the Gray Hair?"

"He was stricken down by the blow of a hatchet, and has lost his mind."

"The Gray Hair never did any thing but good to the Indians. Why should they do him wrong? Where is Bright Eyes, the light of the Wabash?"

"She has been taken prisoner by the chief, Willimack," replied Floyd.

"Willimack is no friend of Tecumthè, although the Prophet loves him. You saw him, in the council-house at Vincennes, point his pistol at the breast of Tecumthè. He is a dog, and one day I will have him hung up in the center of the Shawnee village, because he is a traitor both to red and white men. Where has the Gray Hair gone?"

"The Dead Chief has taken him to his lodge. He will return soon."

A dark cloud passed over the face of the sachem as he heard the name of the great chief of the Pottawatomies. He hated him because he had denounced him to Harrison, and offered to do it in the face of the whole tribe.

"The Dead Chief is no friend to the white men," he said.

"You are wrong, Tecumseh. The chief is our firm friend, and says that because he is, you have ordered him to be slain."

Tecumseh did not deny this, but a look of terrible anger passed over his face, and his hand closed upon the hilt of his knife.

"We shall see whether the Dead Chief can make Tecumthè a dog," he said, savagely. "Then, listen: here above these dead men, I swear by the bones of my fathers that I had no part in their death, and that these are dogs who have slain them. Tecumthè has spoken."

"I believe yew, chief," said the Yankee, who had come up unobserved. "Yew are innercent, as fur as these murders are consarned. I believe my soul you mean *fight*, but yew'll fight fa'r, not murder wimmin and childern."

Tecumseh looked furtively at the Yankee, evidently studying him closely.

"You came between the pistols and Tecumthè," he said. "Why did you do it?"

"Oh, I like fair play, yew know! I always did, as fur as that goes."

"Tecumthè thanks you, and perhaps some day it may be in his power to give you aid. In that day, ask any thing in honor of Tecumthè and he will grant it."

He turned about and gave a loud, startling signal-whoop. Scarcely had he done so when there started out of the thicket a diminutive figure, that of a dwarf, who was the messenger of Tecumseh, a being scarcely three feet high, who stood looking up into the face of his revered leader.

"If you would send any word to Harrison, the Weasel will carry it," said Tecumseh.

"Will it go safe?" said Floyd.

"The honor of a chief is sacred. It shall go to Harrison, if you trust me."

"It shall be done. Order the men to dismount and picket their horses. The chief will remain with us until his return with the answer."

"It is well," said Tecumseh.

Floyd stooped and tore a leaf from his note-book, upon which he wrote in cipher to Harrison, acquainting him with the melancholy fate of his family, and asking permission to take Yankee Seth and as many of the rangers as the latter thought necessary, to track Willimack wherever he had taken Madge. This cipher he intrusted to the Weasel, who took it with a self-satisfied air, thrust it into a small bag he carried at his belt, and set off at a pace which bade fair to take him quickly to his destination.

The morning came at last, and the rangers were up and prepared breakfast. When they had finished, all waited anxiously for the coming of the dwarf, though few believed him capable of performing the journey in so short a time. Tecumseh said he would be at hand in half an hour, but while they waited there came a loud, defiant whoop, and the Dead Chief, gorgeously attired, suddenly bounded forward and faced the astonished Tecumseh, hatchet in hand.

FOOTNOTES:

[2] The name of the chief was so pronounced by the Indians.

CHAPTER IX.

HUNTING THE HUNTERS.

THE first movement of surprise over, the chiefs glared at each other with looks of implacable meaning, and then Tecumseh turned carelessly away as if no such person as the Dead Chief lived upon the earth.

"Listen then, Tecumthè," shouted Dead Chief. "When a chief speaks, let a dog of a Shawnee listen to his words. Do you know that Nabockalish, the Skeleton Scout of the Americans, is on the trail of the Shawnee? He follows you from place to place; he saved the Dead Chief and Floyd from the anger of the Prophet, and he will live to tear the heart from Tecumthè, from Willimack and Elskwatawa, if the Dead Chief does not do it first."

"Who has seen Nabockalish?" said Tecumseh, turning to Floyd and paying no attention to Dead Chief.

"I have seen him," replied Floyd. "So has the Dead Chief and the Long Man."

"Yaas, yaas," said Seth, "I seen him, darn him. And I will say that, of all the outlandish critters I ever see, he beats *my* time."

"Nabockalish is like the wind of the prairies," said Tecumseh. "He comes and goes as he will. Tecumseh has never seen him, but the dead men his hand has laid low are many among the Shawnees. Some day Tecumseh will meet him, and then we shall see who is strongest, the Shawnee chief or the Skeleton Scout."

The Dead Chief again threw himself in the way of Tecumseh.

"Listen, Shawnee. Did you not bid Elskwatawa to slay me when we met?"

"I think the Weasel is coming, Floyd," said the chief. "I hear his whistle."

Dead Chief saw that it was the design of Tecumseh to utterly ignore his presence, and again throwing himself in the way, shook his open hand in the face of the Shawnee and uttered a single word in the Indian language. That word was the most bitter and opprobrious epithet which one Indian could give another, and an insult not to be forgiven or forgotten. The chief drew a long breath and his

fingers which he had laid upon Floyd's arm, closed with a convulsive gripe, that it left black and blue spots upon the arm. But, Floyd knew that if the Dead Chief or Tecumseh ever met, one or the other must go down.

"That saws *yure* leg off, Dead Chief," whispered Seth, dragging the Pottawatomie away by main force. "Yew come along, neow. Here's the Weasel."

As he spoke the mannikin came gliding into camp, and drawing a letter from his pouch, handed it to the captain, who immediately called up his lieutenant and gave him his orders in a low voice.

"Tecumseh," he said, "you came among us freely and you must go away safely; you are at liberty to depart."

"Have you good news from the Governor?" said the chief.

"I can do as I wish," replied the soldier. "I think it better that you should depart now, and let us go our way. Yankee Seth, come here. The Dead Chief must stay with me too."

Tecumseh bid them good-by and turned away with a stately step, closely followed by the Weasel. He had hardly left camp, when the rangers were in the saddle, and after scouts had beat the bushes on every side to make sure that no Indians lurked there, they rode away toward Vincennes, taking the captain's horse with them.

"Take my hand, here, Seth Spink, and you, Dead Chief, and join me in this vow. I will not turn back from this search or see Vincennes again, until Madge Carlisle is freed from bondage or I know that she is dead. And if they have killed her, I swear to give my life to vengeance on her destroyers. Heaven hear my vow."

"And mine," said Seth, solemnly. "This is business."

"The Dead Chief is with you," added the Pottawatomie, quietly.

The three clasped hands over the compact and stood locked in that firm clasp, three strong men, confident in each other. Nothing can give a man respect for another like that of danger shared together.

"Now for the trail," said Floyd. "Can you find it, Seth?"

"I rayther judge I kan," replied the Yankee. "Leastways, I know a critter that kan do it fur me quicker than you can say scat, ef you kan find something the gal has worn lately."

"This will do, then," said Floyd, with a visible flush, taking a ribbon from his pocket. "I stole this from her neck last night when we parted, and have carried it since. What do you propose to make out of that?"

"I'll show yew."

He raised his hand to his mouth and emitted a long, sharp peculiar whistle. It had scarcely ceased to vibrate on the morning air when a rushing sound was heard and a huge wolf-dog, with a cross of the hound in him, came breaking through the bushes at a rolling gallop after the fashion of the beast from whom a part of his blood was derived. This creature fawned upon the scout, who laughed and patted him.

"Wolf is a good dorg," he muttered. "Yew wouldn't think it, but the pesky brute hez been on our trail ever sence I cum deown the river last night, and he wouldn't come to me unlest I called him, no matter how long I was a dewing of it. Here, Wolf; smell tew that ribbin."

The dog put his nose to the ribbon a moment and then ran up to Floyd and rubbed his cold muzzle against his leg.

"'Twon't dew," said the scout, with a puzzled look. "The ribbin ain't rite, 'cause yew hev carried it tew long. Must hev something else."

They searched carefully everywhere, until with a cry of delight, Floyd stooped and picked up a broken bracelet which lay upon the earth, half-trodden into the soil.

"Here is the very thing, Seth. This bracelet—I gave it to her myself in happier days—must be the thing to lead me to my darling."

"Let's have it," said the Yankee. "Here, Wolf."

The dog smelled the bracelet over and over, and then threw up his head, giving utterance to a low howl.

"Silence!" cried the scout. "*Seek her, boy!*"

The dog put his nose to the earth and began to run to and fro in an erratic manner over the ground, until he struck the scent he sought. This done, he gave a short yelp and struck into a slow trot, which the woodmen could easily keep up with, and started for the forest to the north. They slung their rifles and started upon the trail of the dog, which led into a forest-path. Keeping just far enough behind so that they could keep him in sight, they soon were in the dense forest. The Yankee took the lead with a stride which even the agile savage found it difficult

to keep up with at a walk, and he took the long lope so characteristic to his race, and kept close to the heels of the Yankee. Will Floyd, dogged and determined, kept on after them, though it cost him more of an effort than either of the others. On, on, the forest growing deeper at every stride, the dog accommodating his pace to that of the men following, and looking back from time to time, to see that they had not lost him.

"That is a noble dog," said Floyd. "You must give him to me if we succeed."

"I couldn't do that, cap. Wolf and I are old friends. It's seven year now we hev tramped the woods together; but he's gitting old now, the old dorg is."

"How many Indians do you think the captors of Madge number?"

"Six," replied Long Seth, laconically.

"How do you know that?"

"*Because* I know it," was the somewhat dogmatic reply. "I ain't going to give any better reason."

"Is Willimack with them?"

"Ugh," said Dead Chief, laying his finger upon a spot in the path, "Willimack here; see!"

"I'm not posted enough in scouting to read a trace which might have been left by a falling leaf, it is so light. Do you see any thing of Madge?"

"White girl walk woods," replied Dead Chief. "Look close."

The young man stooped and examined the soft earth, and saw there the imprint of a delicate foot, and he realized how great was the knowledge of woodcraft possessed by the two men.

"I say no more," he said. "When the time for fighting comes, I shall not be behind you, but in scouting I am much inferior to either of you. Do you think we can catch them, Seth?"

"Got tew dew it, ain't we, if we keep our vow? I, fur one, want to see Vincennes ag'in. The Guvner treated me right well when I was thar this morning, and give me a rousing good drink, and it tasted mighty well arter so much river-water last night. Ha! the dorg is puzzled. He is trying back."

As he spoke the dog doubled suddenly and "tried back" on the trail, but without success, at first. His master encouraged him to continue, and at last he stopped at

a half-uprooted tree, leaning at a very acute angle across a little stream, so that its bushy top was hardly ten feet from the ground on the other side.

"They've begun tew play Injin," said the Yankee. "Yes they hev, and it suits me. I like a hard job, ef I like any thing in natur'. And Willimack is a right good scout, once he sets his mind tew it. The dorg has lost his trail."

"Let us search for it," cried Floyd, eagerly. "My dear fellow, you see how impatient I am."

"I see it," said Seth, coolly. "The dorg hez lost the trail but I'm darned ef Seth Spink hez, nor the Dead Chief, either. Hev we, old boy?"

"Wah!" said the Dead Chief. "Willimack is a fool, if he thinks to throw dust in the eyes of so great a scout as the Yellow Hair."

"Sartin! sartin!" said Seth. "The trail is on the other side of the creek. Now, I s'pose it puzzles yew tew know how they managed tew break the trail afore they got tew the bank, captin?"

"It does indeed."

"Then look at this tree. Yew won't be the worse fur a lesson in woodcraft, and I'm the man tew give it. Yew see that the bark is scraped off a leetle here at the root. I s'pose Willimack got up, and one of his men handed up the gal tew him, and then he walked eout intew the branches, and dropped her on the other side, onlest one of his men went first tew help her. Anyway, they left footmarks when they dropped."

The Yankee ran up the tree like a cat, and the dog sprung up after him. The next moment they were clambering in the bushy top and dropped to the earth on the other bank.

"Thar's the trail," said Seth, "clear as mud. They made a good plant for green hands tew foller, but they don't half know me, the critters. Now look at this. By gracious, this is a new plant. The trail ends here."

"I am afraid we shall never overtake them," said Will.

"Yew shet up! It takes jest ez long tew hide a trail so that Wolf and me kain't find it as it duz tew find it, and no longer. I'll study that eout in a minnit."

He looked quickly about him. Under the tree-top, where the Indians had dropped to the earth, the soil was tramped hard in places, but these did not extend over a distance of more than ten feet, and none of them led toward the bank. How had

Willimack broken the trail this time? The dog was at fault, for, though he ran to and fro, upon the trampled bank, he could not strike the scent again. At last the eye of the Yankee was attracted by the appearance of the ground toward the stream, and following the trace it led him to the bank. Looking down into the clear water he could see the tracks of moccasins in the sand at the bottom.

"Water don't leave no trail," he muttered. "Yaas, but sand does, bet yure life! Wolf, this way. Stay here, boys, and if I give a whistle, follow me as quick as yew could say 'scat'."

He ran swiftly up the bank of the stream, with the dog beside him. Five minutes after they heard his whistle and rushed after him. He stood upon the bank of the stream holding his dog by the neck.

"They took to the water. I knowed they would, Floyd."

"But how did they get to it?"

"Stripped a piece of bark from an elm and walked tew the water on it and then threw the bark intew the crick. 'Twas cute, by gravy. But, I'll cheat 'em yet, see ef I don't. Go it, Wolf!"

The dog again bounded forward on the trail, and the three men followed him with unabated vigor. Trick after trick in woodcraft was unraveled by the perseverance of the Yankee, whose skill was aided by that of the Dead Chief, no tyro in the art. Night came and found them still on the trail, which now began to freshen, so that they knew their enemies could not be many miles ahead. The scout halted when it became too dark to proceed easily and told them to sit down and eat something.

"Eat; what have we to eat? And besides, I have no appetite for any thing now."

"Hain't yew? That's jest whar we differ. I'm as hungry as a b'ar, and I'd like a bit of b'ar-meat tew. But, es that ain't accessible, so tew speak, we'll hev tew make eout with jerked venison. That won't come so bad, neither."

The scout produced a pouch and took from it a quantity of jerked deer-meat, and began to eat heartily, laying the meat out where his companions could easily reach it. He had hardly begun to eat when he had two helpers, for, upon second thought, the young soldier found himself quite as hungry as the others, and he devoured his share.

"That's something like it, boy. What kind of a fight dew yew s'pose yew'd make 'thout any fodder? Yew'd double up like a dish-clout in the hands of the fust Injin

that yew struck, and that ain't the kind of man we want."

"Are they far ahead?"

"That's jist what I'm going tew be sartin of. No they ain't very fur ahead, leastways I think they ain't. Here, Wolf; ketch hold of that."

He threw a large piece of the venison to the dog, who devoured it eagerly. When they had finished, the scout signaled to them to follow, and, turning aside from the path they had been pursuing, he broke through the tangled bushes and came out in the center of a little clearing made by the hand of man.

In the midst of this sequestered spot some borderman had built a cabin of rough logs after the manner of the settlers of that day. The grass was green and bright about the cabin, but the logs were smoke-begrimed and the roof gone. Upon the grass not far from the door were three grave-like mounds, laid side by side. The one in the center was the largest, and the others looked like the graves of children.

"Yew stay here," said the scout. "It's a good place tew rest, and nobody ever comes here 'cept me and one other."

"Why do they not come here?"

"'Cause the place is ha'nted," replied Seth.

"Haunted!"

"Yes. Them mounds thar are what they look like, graves. And the hunters hev a story that the dead won't rest thar, because they were foully dealt with. Mebbe the story's trew, and those are the graves of little children. It mout be; sadder things hev happened in the history of these times."

"Do you know any thing of the settler who lived here?"

"He never ha'nted me; that I know, and I've stopped here many a time tew rest. Keep quiet here and wait for me."

"Suppose any thing should happen to you?" said Floyd.

"It won't. Waal, yew stay here until morning, and if I ain't here then, go on yure way."

He slung his rifle into the corner, looked to see that his knife and hatchet were in his belt, and disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER X.

TOO MUCH "FIRE-WATER."

THE fears of Yankee Seth had been but too well founded, for Madge had indeed fallen into the hands of the traitorous Willimack. Early in the morning, not long after the escape of Will Floyd from the stake, the stockade had been surprised by a sudden onset from a savage party under the brutal chief. Matthew Floyd, defending her with desperate valor, was felled by the stroke of a hatchet and had dropped into the cellar just as the roof of the burning building began to fall. Willimack seized the half-fainting girl and dragged her out of the burning cabin by main force, keeping a tight grip upon her wrist, for he knew that she possessed enough moral courage to kill herself if he gave her the opportunity. A malicious grin writhed his dark face as the flames curled about the rafters of that doomed house.

"Wah!" he cried. "Burn, home of the white man, burn! The shelter which you refused to the chief, Willimack, you will give to no one. Burn, burn, burn!"

"You are a wretch," cried Madge. "Are you brave enough to kill me now and let me go to the noble man who had given the orphan girl a shelter through these long years?"

"Why should I kill you?" said Willimack. "No; live to cook the venison in the great wigwam of the Wyandot when the white man has ceased from off the land."

"Release me, then, and let me go back to my people. You have done wickedness enough."

He only laughed scornfully, and pointed to the bleeding bodies of the two soldiers and the negro servants. "You see all these," he said. "They stood by and laughed me to scorn when the Yellow Hair struck me down at his feet like a dog. Was this well? A chief is not a dog, and Willimack only lived for vengeance. See; you will from this time be an Indian, live as we live, die as we die, and be buried as we bury our dead. I have spoken. Willimack can not lie."

He turned about and uttered a signal-whoop, at which the men gathered about him, and he addressed them rapidly in the Indian language, which Madge did not understand. He had no sooner done so than they scattered and crossed the river in every conceivable conveyance, upon logs, planks and charred beams, leaving Willimack with only five men beside the ruins. He still held her hand, and

turning away from the river, began his march to the West, closely followed by his men. She saw with ill-concealed fear the numberless artifices the man used to hide the trail, and feared that she was lost. Only once during the day he had stopped, and gave her food, and then marched on again. Her shoes were soon torn by the rough path over which she trod, and her feet bleeding. Once she stopped and said she would go no further, and Willimack turned fiercely upon her with a hatchet, but she did not blench.

"White girl," he said, "do you not fear death?"

"No," she said, boldly. "Death is preferable to the fate you design for me."

"Good. You will make a good wife for a warrior because your heart is strong. Must go; we drag you."

An Indian seized her by each hand and dragged her on. Seeing how powerless she was to resist them, she told Willimack that she would walk if they would not touch her, and kept up boldly until nightfall, when the savages paused and made a camp in a deep hollow, surrounded by heavy woods. He gave her food from his scanty store—cracked corn and dried venison, with water from the running stream hard by. She ate quite heartily, for the long walk had made her hungry. Willimack looked on with a calm smile while she ate, muttering to himself. When she had finished he took green withes and made her sit down at the root of a tree and tied her fast to the mossy trunk. He had hardly done so when one of the men, with a low chuckle, drew from his bosom a huge bottle which he had stolen from the stockade, and flourished it above his head.

"Ugh!" grunted his companions in chorus. "Obisenay somet'ing got, eh?"

"Fire-water! Wa-wa!" replied Obisenay.

The lucky finder lifted the heavy bottle, and a musical gurgle followed. When he lowered it there was quite a difference in the weight, and he passed the bottle to the chief.

"Good?" demanded Willimack.

"Much good," said Obisenay. "Drink."

Willimack did as he was requested, and drank quite deeply. The others followed, and the heavy bottle passed round the circle. A curious scene followed. A man who has never seen a number of Indians drunk has missed a remarkable scene. Seated in a circle, with the girl-prisoner in the center, they kept drinking at a rate which would have astonished a habitual drunkard among the whites, swaying

their bodies to and fro, and giving utterance now and then to a short quick whoop as the liquor began to affect them. The bottle was quickly dispatched, and one of them, by a singular instinct, found out that *he* had purloined a similar one, and they took to this. Now they began to dance and howl, brandishing their hatchets and leaping wildly about among the trees, looking like demons in their war-paint. In the midst of the wild orgie an Indian came suddenly from among the trees and joined them. Willimack by this time was very drunk, but he had sense enough to see that a stranger had come among them. He was a tall, finely-formed man, painted for war, in the dress of a Huron.

Willimack advanced to meet him with stately gravity, reeling in his walk, and endeavoring to stand straight.

"How do, brudder?" he said. "Why you stand no still?"

It was a remarkable feature of the great Willimack that when he copied the white man's vices by getting gloriously drunk, he forgot that he could speak Indian and fell into broken English.

"What does my brother mean?" said the new-comer.

"Why you whirl, whirl, whirl, so? Make ground swing too much."

"My brother has fire-water."

"Ugh, good. Huron drink fire-water with his Wyandot brother," said Willimack.

They brought the second bottle, grievously lessened in weight, and the Huron lifted it to his mouth. He kept it there long enough to drink a great deal, but if he did, the throat did not show the process of swallowing in the slightest degree, and he kept his face partly turned away from the wild band. It seemed to affect him strangely, however, for he drew his hatchet and began to dance wildly with the rest until his eyes fell upon the bound captive.

"Who is here?" he cried. "Her skin is white. What does she here among the Wyandots?"

"Prisoner," said the chief. "Take much scalp, take much fire-water. Wah!"

He had indeed taken much, *too* much fire-water for his own good. The Huron looked hard at the prisoner, and then turned about and asked for the bottle, and prevailed upon the Indians to sit down again.

"Brothers," he said, "there is a devil in the woods."

"Wah," said Willimack.

"He is as tall as a blasted pine, his eyes are like blazing stars. We call him Nabockalish, and white men call him the Skeleton Scout."

Willimack shook his head gravely at the unwelcome name.

"Skeleton Scout no good. Hate him, hate Long Man, hate Floyd, hate every one. Skeleton Scout too much no good."

"It is true. But if the Skeleton Scout should come, what would my brother do?"

"Run!" said Willimack, shortly.

"*Run!* Does a chief of the Wyandots run? Ah! look, look, sons of the Wyandot."

One look was sufficient. Out of the woods, holding a blazing torch in each hand, came the tall figure of the being they had known as the Skeleton Scout, bearing down upon them with a frightful yell. It was too much for human nature to bear, and they stumbled over each other in their wild efforts to escape from their dreaded enemy. One fell into the clutches of the Skeleton Scout, and they went down together, and then the strange specter rose again, and pursued the now scattered and sobered savages, who, wild with terror, were flying in every direction. The Huron had not run far, and to the terror of Madge he came bounding back, flourishing over his head a heavy knife, and she closed her eyes, for it seemed the hour had come for death. But, to her utter surprise, instead of striking her, he cut the bonds upon her hands, just as Long Seth came out of the woods on one side and Floyd upon the other. The young soldier ran to Madge and clasped her in his arms, and the poor girl dropped her head upon his shoulder with a cry of joy.

"Oh, Will. I hoped you would come, and you did not desert me. But your dear father, Will. Alas, he is dead!"

"Almost as bad," said Will, sadly. "He is badly hurt, and is demented. But thank God, you are safe."

"Who is this Indian who cut my bonds?" she said, turning to him.

"Bright Eyes does not know a Pottawatomie in the war-paint of a Huron," replied the Indian. "Dead Chief is the man who will do much for the beautiful daughter of the forest."

"Thank you, chief. And Seth too; I might have known he would not desert me."

"Neow shet up," said the scout. "Nuff talk of that kind, yew know. Ef yew are glad I cum, keep it tew yureself. Talk about it, and I won't believe yew are glad,

so thar. Besides, we ain't got time tew *now*, I jedge, seeing that the pesky varmints will be arter us in less than half an hour. But, by George, cap., ef I didn't see that pesky critter they call the Skeleton Scout, then I don't know nothing 'bout it. He shot by me like a ball out'n a rifle, the flamed critter did, and he yelled wuss than any painter yew ever hern tell of."

"A Wyandot lies yonder," said the Dead Chief. "Let us see if his hand is upon him."

Seth snatched up a blazing brand and followed the chief. Obisenay, the Wyandot, who had brought forward the first bottle of liquor, lay upon his face on the green sward. They turned him over, and as in the case of the man they had found outside of the stockade upon the night when Willimack first attacked the block-house, they could find no wound upon him. Without stopping to comment upon the singular circumstance, Seth signed to his companions to follow, and hurried away.

How had Seth come so quickly to the aid of Madge? It was explained easily. When he left Will Floyd and the Indian in the ruined hut, he knew well the camp of Willimack could not be far away, and he chose to go upon his first scouting expedition alone. He had found the camp not half a mile from the ruins of the hut, and, after satisfying himself with regard to it, he at once returned to his friends and went back on the trail. They first painted the Indian like a Huron, and so smeared and stained his scanty clothing that it might have belonged to any tribe, and sent him into camp after seeing that the Indians were likely to get very drunk. He had been instructed to brain an Indian with his hatchet upon getting a preconcerted signal, and was waiting for it when the Skeleton Scout burst out upon them, and put the Indians to flight.

"Seems tew my benighted intellec' that this skellington mixes in with my business a good deal," said Seth. "I was making up to git my posish so that I could throw an Injin cold, jest about the time I give the signal, when, "*yah!*" went this living skellington, blame him, and when I got thar the work was all done! You'd better kerry the gal, capt'ing. She's mighty tired."

Will lifted the girl in his arms, and carried her for some distance, when Seth reached out and took her. "Thar, baby," he said. "I'm ashamed of yew. Allow yer feelings to overcome yew that way, eh? Let *me* kerry her. I'm powerful strong in the legs and arms. Guess our fam'ly are all pooty healthy that way. Injin, don't let any of them niggers creep up on us unwar's. Keep yure weather eye open, fur I don't trust that pesky Willimack a cent's wuth. I don't by Jehosaphat."

Even while talking, the Yankee managed to keep up his long stride, carrying Madge like a child. "Lay yure head on my shoulder, little gal," he said. "Yew needn't be afraid of tiring *me*, not a bit! I ain't liable tew it, nohow. I've kerried heavier weights than yew are, twice as fur as from here to Vincennes, and rayther liked it, by gosh. Neow my father, when he was a hundred and forty year old, kerried two hundred pounds of wheat across his farm, easy."

"Oh, hush, Seth. How can you tell such stories?" said Madge, who somehow felt the utmost confidence in the skill and knowledge of the country possessed by the Yankee.

"Don't believe me, so tew speak. Neow, that riles up my feelings, powerful bad. It duz, by gracious! Tew think that this little critter hez the face tew doubt the family traditions! Ef it was a man that dared tew say it I'd make him repent in dust and ashes. But, as it's nothing but a gal, I dunno ef thar's any use getting mad. What's that, chief?"

"Wyandot on the trail," replied the chief.

"I thought so. Waal, thank fortin', they kan't trail us in the dark. Yew don't think the eternal critter has picked up any more men, chief?"

"Good many," said the chief. "Prophet keep camp not far away. Bad Indian *very* bad! Good many in woods."

"I reckon yer right, chief. He's picked a party some'rs that he knowed of. He wouldn't hev stopped tew git drunk ef he didn't think himself tarnation safe. Oh, blame my cats ef this ain't tew cussed bad."

"Let us keep on all night," said the young soldier, eagerly.

"Oh, git eout! Willimack is sure tew hev every path as black with Injins as a nigger's pocket, and we're likely tew blunder intew a trap, I guess. So let's try another way."

He had stopped a moment hesitatingly, and turning aside from the path he had been pursuing, struck into the woods, crossed the clearing in which the hut stood, casting a sidelong look at the three graves whose outlines he could just make out in the darkness, and Madge felt a slight shudder run through his frame, and she thought him tired and begged him to set her down. But he refused. "I could kerry yew in one hand, little one," he said. "Yew rest easy. I tell yew, I was thinking of something else."

The clamor of pursuit could be heard on every side as the Indians closed in upon

them, and the Yankee muttered to himself. "Hunted close! But I'll save her yit; I sw'ar it. Ah, here we ar'!"

As he spoke he reached the base of a little hill, rocky and precipitous, rising in the center of the forest. Up the rocky slope he climbed, lifting Madge over the rocks until he reached a sort of parapet running round the crest of the hill.

"Gather leaves and brush, boys," he said. "We've got tew hev a fire tew fight by. Build it here, outside the fort, so't it will throw a light down the hill. It's the only place they kin come up by, and three rifles will make it lively for 'em."

As the fire was kindled and the flames leaped up, Madge looked curiously about her. She was in the center of one of those curious Indian forts which remain in many of the States, now grassgrown and in decay. A low parapet, perhaps five feet high, inclosed a space of three or four hundred square feet. Behind them, the mountain rose high and wild, nearly inclosing three sides. The place where they had come up, a narrow defile not three feet wide, was the only course by which the Indians could assail them. The fire blazed merrily up, just as two or three savages appeared at the base of the hill.

"Fire!" cried Yankee Seth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HIDING-PLACE.

As his command rung boldly out upon the air of night, the scout leveled his weapon and fired at the foremost savage. There was a horrible yell, and the man threw up his arms and rolled headlong down the slope. Two others darted out into the light and were received by the Dead Chief and Floyd. One of them fell, shot through the shoulder, and the other dragged himself groaning away, with a broken thigh. They quickly reloaded their rifles and were ready for the next rush. The warm reception the foremost had received somewhat damped the ardor of the rest, and they remained in the edge of the timber, firing a useless volley at the party so nicely concealed behind the old rampart.

"Kinder sets 'em back," laughed the Yankee. "They didn't s'pect us tew turn on 'em so darned quick. Neow, don't it beat all natur' that Injins back deown so quick? Oh, come out, Willimack, dew; I want tew see yew! Don't hang back and

be a coward. That ain't acting like a man, yew know. Come out and *be* a man. I would, yew know."

But, in spite of this feeling adjuration, the Wyandot persisted in keeping out of sight. To tell the truth, he was not yet certain whether his brain was quite clear of liquor, and was inwardly cursing Obisenay up hill and down dale for putting temptation in his way. He had met with a party of his own men, who were coming down the river to join the Prophet, and had enlisted them in the service, so that at least sixty men were ranged in the woods in front of the ancient fort. But, they were mostly young men, and though good hunters, the majority of them had never been engaged in a battle except with men of their own race. The loss of one of their number and the severe wounding of two others, had given them a wholesome awe of the deadly rifles of the hunted men. Willimack was beside himself with rage, and moreover was in deadly fear of the Skeleton Scout. He had not dared to tell the new-comers that this fearful creature had assailed them, and that it was by his hand that the unfortunate bottle-holder, Obisenay, had met his death, for he feared they would scatter in every direction and leave him to do the fighting alone. None of his original party remained, for they were doubtless running yet, satisfied that the Skeleton Scout was at their heels. Willimack knew his men, and determined to try an assault, and passed the word to that effect.

Hardly had he done so when there came bounding over the rocks toward the fort a score or more of painted figures, howling like demons, and brandishing their weapons in air.

"Crouch down, Madge," cried Floyd; "you may get hurt."

"Am I better than the rest?" replied Madge. "Give me a knife. I will not fall alive into the hands of Willimack if I can help it."

There was no time to hesitate. With a look of unutterable affection the young man gave her a small stiletto which he carried inside his coat, and whirling suddenly, shot a savage completely through the head who was coming too near—"throw'd him cold," as the Yankee said. Two more went down before the weapons of the scout and Dead Chief, and the rest swarmed on for vengeance. Will Floyd said nothing, but, grasping his rifle by the barrel, he poised it for defense. The Indians must advance upon them through a narrow space where more than three could not pass abreast, and were hemmed in by perpendicular walls of rock thirty feet high.

"Give 'em the pistols, Will," cried the Yankee, "and then charge 'em."

Both men drew their pistols, and fired into the coming savages. The Dead Chief had no pistol, but he stood with his lips apart as if after a race, his body thrown into a statuesque attitude, with his left foot advanced, and body slightly inclined toward the coming foe, ready for a spring. They could trust him to fight bravely. The discharge of the pistols at such close quarters into the compact body of savages, could not fail to make bad work, and groans and cries succeeded. Then, uttering wild yells which none but forest-men could imitate, the three brave men leaped over the stockade and rushed at the leading savages.

"Give 'em goss!" cried the Yankee.

They stood in the narrow way, Seth and the Indian, with hatchet and knife, and the young soldier with his clubbed rifle. The foremost Indians, unused to such enemies, would have fallen back if possible, but their companions in the rear pushed them forward, only to fall by the deadly weapons of their determined foes. Willimack, who had heard the polite request on the part of the Yankee that he would "come out and be a man," had prudently kept in the rear, and now found that his men were meeting a strenuous resistance, and indeed that they made no advance, while the groans and cries from the front, the clash of weapons, and the triumphant cries of the defenders, told that they had the best of it. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise, for the Indians were so wedged into the narrow space that they could scarcely move their hands, while the others stood where they could fight freely. Seeing that he was gaining nothing by this mode of fighting, the Wyandot called off his men, only to find them sadly decimated by their encounter with the trio.

Cursing the obstinacy of the defenders as heartily as any man could do, Willimack drew off his men after bringing away such of the dead and wounded as the Dead Chief would consent to part with. Upon counting the loss and gain, after the battle, Willimack found this total: four killed outright in the charge, three desperately wounded, and left on the ground, and as many more brought off. Over a dozen wounded in various ways, though not so badly as to disable them, and they had no reason to believe that their enemies had been wounded in the least.

They had already fallen back to the fort, and were taking breath after the struggle. The Dead Chief was coolly arranging the hideous trophies he had taken time to strip from the heads of his enemies, paying no attention to the look of horror upon the face of Madge, who wondered that a man who had fought as gloriously as he had done in beating back the enemy, could think of tearing and mutilating the dead. But, he handled them as coolly as if they had been pieces of

paper, shook the blood from them, and thrust them into his belt with a gratified air.

"Wah!" he said. "Why do we wait? Let us charge the enemy and take their scalps."

"Easy, chief, easy," said the Yankee. "Don't rile up so darned quick. I reckon we are safer here than we would be eout thar in the woods. Eternal Jehosaphat, but didn't we let intew 'em? The critter don't like us a bit, I judge."

"We are able to keep this pass against them," said Will.

"Throw a couple of sticks on that fire," replied Seth. "I reckon yure right, but it looks tew me as ef this pass was going tew keep us. We ain't got pervisions enough tew last half a day."

"I never thought of that. Indeed, we could not stand a siege," replied Will.

"No, cuss the luck. Give me enuff grub, and I'll hold this place alone ag'in' the hull Wyandot nation. But, Lord, I'd give my old moccasins fer a drink of water now."

"Here is my flask. There is about pint of brandy in it."

"Good," said Seth eagerly. "Take jest one swallow, and be sure yew don't make it a long one, 'cause we want it tew last."

Will did as the Yankee told him, and passed the flask along.

"I've got a big mouth," said Seth. "I could take the hull at one swaller, but that wouldn't be fair. Here, chief; take hold."

The chief shook his head.

"Oh, I forgot. Beg pardon, chief, yew are a teetotaller. It would be a darned sight better fer the Injins ef they all follered the same principle, but unfortnitly they don't. Here gal, take hold."

"No," said Madge. "Indeed, I am not thirsty. Remember that I had just been eating and drinking when you rescued me, and have not been going through the same struggle since. I can wait until to-morrow before I need any thing."

"Waal, lie down, little 'un, and try tew git a little sleep. I'd dew any thing tew save yew, little gal."

"Thank you, my good Seth. I know you would."

He scraped a pile of leaves and twigs into one corner of the work, and induced

her to lie down and rest. Then he went back to the others.

"Now look here, boys," he said. "It's all right tew talk about holding eout a week or a fortnight here on a flask of brandy and a piece of jerked venison about big enough tew give one h'arty man a good meal, but, it won't work. We kan't dew it, and I reckon some on us has got tew go under. Neow look here! I kin hide that little gal so that the devil hissself kan't find her, and I kan hide one more along with her. But, I kan't hide three or four."

"Save her, Josh, at all hazards."

"That's what I say. I'm going tew save her, but someone hez got tew be with her, yew know. Now then, who shill it be?"

"You, by all means," said Will.

"Not a bit of it. I'm tew long tew stick intew my hiding-place handy, and besides, the gal mout not like it. I guess you'll hev tew be the one."

"I will not desert you, Seth."

"Oh, git eout. Desert the devil! Once I git yew tew safe I laugh at every Injin in the territory. Come here."

A nearly perpendicular but irregular wall of stone formed the back part of the fort. A point jutted out considerably further than the rest, leaving a fissure about four feet across. In this fissure a large stone, apparently broken off from the rock above, lay loosely upon the earth, with its side pressed against the rock. Putting his ponderous strength to the stone, the Yankee moved it easily to one side and disclosed an opening close to the ground, nearly three feet high. "Git in, and see how yew like it," he said. "It's one of *my* holes."

The young soldier crawled in, and striking a match, saw that he was in a hole scooped out by the hand of nature in the solid wall, which was large enough for two persons to sit in comfortably, though they could not rise to their feet. Having satisfied himself, he crept out as he came in. "The air seems pure," he said.

"How is it when the stone is replaced?"

"First rate. Lord love yew, I've been in that hole menny and menny a time. Yew kan't think heow com'fable it is tew lay thar and hear the Injins howl outside, and wonder heow the devil yew got away. It's mighty nice. Git the gal and bring her here. Tell her tew stoop low, 'cause some of them pesky cusses may be on the watch. Pass the word for the Dead Chief tew keep up a good look-out. Dead? He ain't dead, not much he ain't."

Madge was resting peacefully upon her bed of leaves, but rose and followed her lover without a word, while he explained to her the nature of the hiding-place which Yankee Seth had showed him. Seth saw that the young man was still very much averse to leaving him to fight himself out of the cordon of his enemies alone, and made an angry movement.

"Neow, don't say a darned word, Will Floyd. Who but yew ought to stay and take keer of the little gal? As fer me, I'm in the hands of the Great Being, even the Injins adores, and ef my time hez come tew die now, I ain't the man that will kick ag'inst it. But, my time ain't come yit, I feel it in my bones. Go in, little gal. Take yure rifle and am'nition, boy. Yew may need it."

"Yes," said Will, sternly. "Madge shall never go to an Indian lodge. I promise her that, and I will keep my word."

"That's right, keep yure word tew the little gal, and when the Injin wars are done and yew are married, I'll come tew see yew in yure house on the Wabash. Yew bet! See this peep-hole here, cap. Yew kan lie flat in thar and see all the fun, and I'm going tew give yew some."

"Do not be rash, Seth. Escape if you can."

"A rash man is never a good scout," was the quiet reply. "Go in!"

Will followed Madge into the hole in the rock and lay upon his face after the stone had been replaced, peeping out into the fort. The Yankee was standing just in front of him, with his hand upon the shoulder of the Indian, and Will thought he had never seen two nobler specimens of manly beauty in his life.

The firelight shone upon the noble figures of the two men, and the Yankee was whispering in the ear of the savage. A bright smile crossed the face of the Indian and he looked at him in a puzzled way, and then shook his hand heartily.

"I wonder what they are up to now?" muttered Will. "That Yankee is equal to any deviltry, and now that he has me off his hands he don't seem to fear the Indians in the least."

"What is he doing?" said Madge, who felt a strange security in the odd hiding-place.

"They are both laughing," replied Will. "There, they are trampling out the fire. I can see no more. Ha! the Indians are on the move; I can hear their hurrying feet. Do you fear, Madge?"

"No. Am I not with you, dear Will."

"Yes, darling, yes. And if they find us out—"

"You have two pistols. One for me, one for yourself. If you escape alive and I fall into the hands of Willimack, never look your friends in the face, for you will be a coward."

"Hush," he said, in a hoarse voice. "You have my promise already. Come close to me and keep quiet. When the time comes, give me the word, and then—oh God, it will drive me mad to do it."

"When the time comes I shall die as bravely as another," replied Madge. "Kiss me once upon the lips, and we will die together, my hero, my own!"

He kissed her frantically, and she returned the caress. At another time, it might have caused a blush to this innocent girl; but, in the presence of this great danger, she forgot all this, and with her hand clasped in his, waited for the blow which was sure to fall if their hiding-place was found.

A wild yell of mingled rage and hatred burst from the woods around, and the savage foe came pouring over the rampart of the old fort, some carrying torches, some holding their weapons ready for a blow. But, they found no enemy, and the frantic cries told that they were disappointed of their prey. Will pressed the hand of the brave girl, which did not tremble in his grasp, and kept his eyes fixed upon the movements of the enemy. They were rushing madly about the inclosure, looking in every place where a man could by any chance be concealed, without effect. Willimack was at their head, painted to the waist, holding in one hand a blazing torch and in the other a heavy hatchet.

As the young man saw the scoundrel, he raised his pistol, and it was only by the thought that *her* life would be sacrificed that he refrained from shooting the wretch through the heart.

The Indians came into the crevice in which they were hidden, and one of them actually leaned upon the rock which shielded them! The grasp of the soldier tightened upon the wrist of Madge, and she met his pressure by raising herself a little and putting one rounded arm about his neck. But, the danger passed, for the moment. The Indian went away and they breathed more freely, when a commanding voice, which seemed to come from the sky, shouted:

"*Willimack!*"

The chief looked up, and there, upon the rocks thirty feet above his head stood the Skeleton Scout, pointing his unshaking finger at the Wyandot.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST TRIAL.

AT the sight, nearly all the cowardly followers of the Wyandot took flight and buried themselves in the woods, or burrowed like conies among the rocks. Willimack was evidently frightened beyond measure at the appearance of the being he so dreaded, but was too proud to seek safety in flight.

There stood the Skeleton Scout, the grinning death's-head revealed, the fire flashing from his lurid orbs, and that long finger pointing downward.

"Dog!" cried the spectral being in a hollow voice. "How much blood must you shed before you will be satisfied? How long must the spirits of the rocks and the trees carry your evil deeds to the Great Spirit before he sends the Great White Bear to carry you way to the abode of the lost?"

This was spoken in the Indian tongue, and seemed to have a terrible effect upon the savage, for he bowed his head in terror, with his arms folded upon his breast.

"Nabockalish is a strong spirit," he said. "The Wyandot nor the Shawnee is not strong enough to stand before him. Why does he hate the poor Indian?"

"Because the Indian is a fool!" replied the Skeleton Scout, fiercely. "Listen to the words of Nabockalish. I see a great cloud in the sky. The Indians have roused the anger of the Great Spirit, and an evil day is come upon them. There will be war along the Wabash, and many will fall in battle. The Shawnee will be driven out and no longer possess the land of his fathers. Perhaps the Wyandot will go with him? There is a cloud before my eyes and I can not see it plainly. Turn back, then, Willimack, and flee the wrath of the Great Spirit."

"Why should Willimack turn back?" replied the Indian, fiercely. "A lying spirit talks through Nabockalish—a spirit which has no love for the Indian. Let the lying spirit depart, for Willimack will not listen to his words. He will fight under the banner of the Prophet until the white man shall cease from the land."

"Then, listen," shrieked the specter. "The spirit of the rocks and trees have heard your words and will carry them to the Great Spirit. Behold!"

As he spoke there was a strange, hissing sound, and a brilliant flame leaped up, lighting the surrounding darkness. The flame ran in erratic circles like a fiery

serpent and vanished into thin air, and when they looked again, the Skeleton Scout was gone, while the air was heavy with a sulphurous smell. The sight was too much for the savages, and they broke and ran in every direction, stumbling over the rocks, the redoubtable Willimack leading them in their flight. Bursts of horrible laughter followed them as they fled.

"Astonishing," muttered Will. "This passes my comprehension. Is my friend, the Skeleton Scout, an inhabitant of the lower world, after all? I am ashamed to say that he has very nearly succeeded in frightening me."

Terrible screams sounded through the forest and accelerated the flight of the savages. A dead silence succeeded, and then the stone was violently pushed aside.

"Now," cried Madge, "keep your word, if you love me, Will."

"Hold on," cried a voice they well knew, "none of that, Floyd; come eout. By gravy, that Skileton Scout is a gentleman of great penetration, and I'd give forty dollars fur the privilege of shaking hands with the darned fool. He's a little brimstony in his karacter, but darn it all, what's that, once yew git used tew it? He routed the Injins, hoss, foot and dragoons. Lord bless my heart alive, heow they *did* let eout. I thought Willimack would break his neck, sartin."

"Where have you been?" said Will, helping Madge out of their hiding-place.

"Oh, we shinned up the rocks thar. We couldn't lug the gal up or I'd 'a' done it afore. 'Twouldn't dew tew desart her, yew know. Now, chief, what are they dewing abeout these days?"

"Running," replied the Dead Chief, sententiously. "Very much scared."

"Yew look a little shaky yureself, old man!" said Seth, with a laugh, "and, by gosh, it set me back a leetle trifle, when that fiery sarpint went flashing deown the rocks. The outlandish critter deserves a pension for helping us eout of this scrape. Here; gimme the gal. Show a light, chief. The red devils will think it's the Living Skellington coming arter 'em ag'in, and run the faster. Haw! haw! haw! It tickles me most tew death tew see how the critters run."

The Dead Chief caught up a half extinguished torch which one of the Wyandots had dropped, and led the way out of the narrow pass. Once safe at the bottom, he extinguished the torch and led them in the darkness. The Yankee came next, carrying the girl in his arms, while Will Floyd, with leveled rifle, brought up the rear. In this way they passed on for over a mile, when they struck a well-beaten path, and pursued it for two hours in silence. Then the Yankee called a halt.

"I guess we may as well halt, boys. More as like ez not we'll foul a snag ef we keep on in the dark. The woods are chock full of Injins, and when Willimack gets over his little scare he'll come a-raving, and charging arter us, that I know. Sit down on this log, little 'un. Yew don't weigh so much on the start, but, Lord love yure little heart ef yew don't grow mitey heavy arter a while! I'm glad we got eout of *that* trap. How dew yew feel, little gal? Considerable kind o' tired, eh?"

"Very tired, and I am sorry to say, a little sleepy," replied Madge.

"That's all rite," said long Seth. "Nat'ral ez life. Waal, thar ain't anything ag'in' a snooze, ez I knows on. We won't go any furder till morning. Scrape up them leaves and make a bed fur the gal. Capting, yew won't mind lending her yure coat, I guess?"

He stooped and spread out the leaves, and Madge lay down beside the log and her lover spread his coat over her, and sat down to watch while the Yankee took his station, rifle in hand, to wait for any emergency which might arise, while the Indian rolled himself against the log and fell asleep, but with his weapons ready to start up, at a moment's warning. Madge was awakened at early morning and found her friends ready for a start.

"Rouse up, little 'un," said the Yankee. "We ain't got any time tew waste. I ain't got anything fur yew tew eat 'cept this cracked corn. The Dead Chief took it from an Injin last night that didn't want it no more. You kan eat it as yew march."

She followed them cheerfully, eating the corn he had given her, and laughing lightly. In the midst of great danger she maintained a cheerful confidence which was inspiriting to the men who had come to save her. This happy confidence in them made their task lighter. Yankee Seth would have carried her again, but she refused utterly, saying that her night's rest had left her strong and able to bear any ordinary fatigue. They marched slowly, for the signs were ominous, and once or twice the scout stopped and listened carefully to see if the sounds about him were suspicious. She could see that he feared danger, yet maintained an unswerving fortitude.

"Brave gal," muttered the Yankee. "Make a good sojer's wife, *she* will!"

They stopped at noon beside a little brook, which the young man remembered to have crossed the day before, and again took food. But, the Yankee scout kept glancing from side to side and often started up and looked about him. Near by was a giant sycamore, with a hollow near the root, large enough for a person to

enter.

"See here, Miss Madge," said Seth. "We've got tew scout a little. I don't see no other way, so yew jest git intew that holler tree and wait fur us. We won't leave yew long. Yew'll find a step cut in the side, wide enough fur yew tew stand on. Yew'd better git up on that, fur mebbe an Injin might take it intew his darned old head tew look in thar. Now, boys, come with me."

The hollow was very dark, but Madge grasped the stiletto which her lover had given her, and did not fear. An hour passed, and they did not return. At the end of that time a head was thrust into the cavity.

"Bright Eyes," said a voice which sounded strangely hollow in the cavity. "Come down; the Yellow Hair has sent for you."

"Who is that?" said Madge.

"Dead Chief," was the reply.

She descended hurriedly, and stooped to emerge from the opening. As she did so, she was roughly seized upon and a hand pressed so tightly upon her mouth and nostrils that she found it impossible to cry out. A scarf was torn from her neck and speedily transformed into a gag, which was thrust rudely into her mouth, and when she looked up she saw the leering face of Willimack close to her own.

"Aha!" he hissed. "Where is the Skeleton Scout? Where is Nabockalish now to save you? The spirit of the rocks and trees are things at which a great chief laughs!"

Taking her in his arms he dashed into the forest which bordered the path, and she found herself in the midst of the remnant of the band of Willimack, and in their midst, tightly bound and bleeding from a cut in the forehead, was her lover. He uttered a cry of horror as he saw her brought in.

"You too, Madge! Then the cup of my misery is full indeed."

She tried to speak, but the gag forbade it, but he understood her.

"Yankee Seth is dead. I saw him fall into a deep gully, shot by the hand of this traitorous savage. The brave fellow fought gallantly, but fell overpowered by numbers."

The Wyandot laughed in a sardonic manner, evidently triumphing in the misery of which he was the cause. He approached and took the gag from the mouth of

Madge.

"Talk to him, *talk*," he shrieked. "Let him tell you how Willimack, the Wyandot, avenges himself upon those who have done him great wrong. The Long Man is dead, though warriors have not yet found his body. The Dead Chief is flying through the forest with four fleet runners upon his track, and you two are here, to try what it is to dare the vengeance of a great chief."

"Listen to me, Wyandot," cried Will, angrily. "I am in your hands, and you have it in your power to use me as you will. But, so surely as you do a wrong to this sweet girl, I will find a way to haunt you from my grave."

"You shall never know a grave," screamed the chief, shaking his clenched hand in his face. "Your ashes shall be scattered to the four winds of heaven. Even your bones shall be consumed and the winds shall carry them away. She shall look on and see. Aha! Her face grows paler! She is like the white lily that lies upon the summer water when the sun is high."

"Chief," she said, "here I am and in your power. Let me see if you care for me as you say. Let Floyd go free."

"And if I do, will you go into my wigwam?"

"I am in your power, as you know."

"Do not promise," cried Floyd. "Do you think I would purchase my life on such terms as these?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Is a Wyandot a fool to let you go free? No; she shall see you die, and then she shall enter my wigwam all the same. A great chief never lies. You shall die upon the spot where you came and stole the Bright Eyes away, when the accursed fire-water of the white man had robbed me of my strength. Come!"

He made a signal, and several Indian ponies were led from the surrounding thickets. Madge was forced to mount one of these and Will another. The latter had his feet tied beneath the horse, and in this condition was led away, surrounded by about twenty of the wild band. It was growing dark when they reached the scene of the first escape of Madge; there the party dismounted and tethered their horses. This done, they tied the young soldier to a tree, and heaped light wood about him, while Madge threw herself at the feet of the stern chief and begged for her lover's life. He only showed by a scornful smile that he saw and heard her, but stood gazing at the prisoner, the second time he had seen him at the stake.

"You escaped from the Prophet; from me you can not escape," he hissed. "Away, squaw! How dare you come between a great chief and his vengeance?"

"As you hope for mercy, chief; as you expect ever to know a quiet home, do not torture him," cried Madge. "I ask it on my knees."

"Away!" cried the chief. "Light the pile!"

As a hand was outstretched to do his bidding, there was a rush of many feet, and the glade was filled with mounted Indians of the Shawnee nation! Willimack understood at a glance that they had come to rob him of his prey, and, with a yell of baffled rage, darted at Madge with uplifted hatchet. But, there started up before him the giant figure of Yankee Seth, who dealt him a tremendous blow with his fist which felled him to the ground. Madge started up with a glad cry and threw herself into his arms.

"Thank God you have saved us, gallant man! A life would not repay the debt I owe you now."

"Oh, git eout," replied the excited scout. "I don't ask it, dew I?"

There was a suspicious moisture in his eyes, however, and he brushed the sleeve of his hunting-shirt across them in a hurried manner, and putting her gently aside, ran to cut Will Floyd loose.

"Who are these?" said Will, after pressing the hand of the Yankee warmly in his own. "They are Indians. I am afraid it is out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"Not a bit of it!" replied the Yankee. "Tecumseh is here."

"Tecumseh!"

"Yes," replied the full rich voice of that noble chief, advancing. "The white man has been wronged by those who claim to be friends of Tecumseh, and who but he should set it right? Willimack has a bad heart. He has done more evil than he knows to the Shawnees. Bright Eyes, let the chief tell how glad he is to see you safe."

Madge came forward and gave him her hand thankfully.

"You came in time, chief. How did it happen?"

"Yankee Seth is a great brave. He fell into a hole which was very deep, but the Great Spirit was watching over the safety of Bright Eyes, and saved his life. Tecumseh was already on the march to save you from Willimack, and we met. The rest you know."

Willimack had risen, and was looking on with a lowering brow. His men were standing, cowed and fearful, in the presence of the great chief, but he alone maintained an undaunted mien.

"Can Tecumseh come to me and steal away my prisoners?" he said. "Is this being a friend to the Wyandots?"

"A great chief should not be cruel," replied Tecumseh. "Willimack was never the friend of Tecumseh. Chief, you have been very wicked, but you are the friend of the Prophet. Go; I will take care of your prisoners."

Willimack scowled fiercely about him, and for a moment seemed to meditate an assault upon the great Shawnee. But the abject submission of his men showed that he would have no backers, and he dared not trust himself alone against the mighty arm of Tecumseh. Shaking his hand in anger at the chief, he turned away, and the forest hid him from view.

"Go on," muttered Seth. "Yew are a marked man from this hour. I *am on yer trail!*"

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

THEY camped that night upon the spot which had witnessed their last trial and rescue, and set out at early morning to ride to the town of Vincennes, accompanied by Tecumseh and a portion of his band. Upon the evening of the next day they camped again a few miles from Vincennes, where they were met by the rangers of Floyd, who had been sent out on a scout in the direction of the ruined station. Knowing them to be safe, Tecumseh bade them farewell. His band already were on the march, and he stopped a moment to press the hands of Floyd and Yankee Seth.

"The heart of Tecumseh is made of stern stuff," he said. "But, it is very sad when he thinks that when we may meet again it may be as enemies. In that hour do not forget that we have been friends."

Making them a mute gesture of farewell, he turned upon his heel and left them. The young soldier took the hand of Madge and they stood alone in the gathering darkness. In that sad hour, a father driven mad by his wrongs, his faithful

servants slaughtered, the young man felt that she was indeed all to him. A low growth of bushes separated them from the rangers, and they were very close together, when there rose before them the fearful figure of the Skeleton Scout. It stood a moment looking fixedly at them, when the ghastly head disappeared, although the body remained, and a boisterous laugh greeted them as Nabockalish, the Skeleton Scout, stood confessed in the person of Yankee Seth.

"Seth Spink!" cried Floyd. "Is it possible?"

"You the Skeleton Scout?" murmured Madge.

"Jess so. I'm that identickle cuss," said Seth, laughing. "But, don't tell the boys, fer the disguise is a right good 'un."

"But you were always as frightened at the Skeleton Scout as any one," said Madge.

"That was a blind, you know," he replied. "Ef yew'd 'a' taken time tew think, yew'd 'a' seen that I was never on hand at the same time the Skellington was. I'll tell yew how it was done, ef you'll promise tew keep it secret."

"Agreed," said Floyd.

"Wal, then, I've got the apperatus here. Come closer, yew'll see how easy it works. Yew see my hunting-shirt is loose round the neck. That leaves room fer the thing tew lay com'fable and out of sight. I pull up this black cloth like this, yew see, and it covers my head, leaving a place fer my mouth and eyes. Then, here's a blow-pipe. I blow on it, and yew see what happens."

He inflated his cheeks and blew hard upon the pipe, and a number of white stripes upon the surface of the black cloth began to rise and swell until they assumed, in the darkness, the appearance of a ghastly skeleton head. When it was inflated he turned a stop which kept in the air, and putting up his hand, turned the slides of a pair of small "bull's-eye" lamps, and the Skeleton Scout was before them. Floyd could not avoid a hearty laugh at the ease with which the thing was done. Seth joined in the laugh, turned the stop and allowed the air to escape, pulled down the contrivance and pushed it under his loose hunting-shirt, and appeared in his own person.

"It don't take me tew moments tew change characters and be Nabockalish or Yankee Seth, jest ez I like," he said. "Let the gal go to camp a minnit, Will. I want tew speak tew yew."

"A moment, my friend, and then I will go," said Madge. "How did you produce

the appearance of the fiery serpent upon the rocks, after we were hidden in the hole in the rock."

"I dropped a train of gunpowder in the shape I wanted it, and set fire tew it," the Yankee said, laughing. "'Most any specter will be ez easy 'counted fer ez I am, if people could only git tew the root. There, go away, gal."

Madge went slowly back to camp, and the scout stood a moment in deep thought.

"Yew seen them graves by the ruined cabin in the woods, my boy?" said he. "I didn't tell yew whose they were, because that would 'a' bin ez good ez telling yew my secret. My wife and children lay thar, jest ez I buried 'em when I found 'em scalped and gory, when I cum back from a hunt. I've lived a scout and hunter since, and not a bad one, ez old man Harrison will tell yew, and I've had my revenge on a few of the reptiles. When I wear the disguise of the Skeleton Scout I spare none."

"And how is it you leave no sign?" said Floyd.

"Yew didn't look in the right place. Both those dead hounds yew seen were stabbed threw the brain behind the ear. I've got a knife with a thin blade, that leaves no blood outside. Perhaps I'm wrong, but, whenever that idee comes over me, I think of them green graves on the sunny slope, and then I'm an iron man ag'in. Don't tell this tew any one, and try tew forgive me if I have bin tew blame."

Floyd silently extended his hand and the scout grasped it firmly in his own. They were tried friends from that hour, and never in the after peril which came to that frontier forgot the dangers they had shared together.

Matthew Floyd, under the care of a good surgeon, recovered somewhat his shattered faculties, but, the sound of an Indian war-whoop would always drive him wild in a moment.

The young couple were married the next week and lived in Vincennes, and remained happy in each other's love until the war began in earnest along the frontier, and the rangers, with their gallant leader, marched to the fierce battle at Tippecanoe, where the power of the Prophet was broken, and Willimack lost his life.

Dead Chief remained true to the whites, and at last, in a fearfully tragic manner, which another tale may serve to show, sealed his devotion with his life.

The Skeleton Scout was still seen at night, flashing in the darkness beside the Indian camp-fires; and when the war was over, came back to live in quiet upon a farm just outside Vincennes, and go down to the grave honored and beloved. And Madge Floyd taught her children to honor the name of Nabockalish, the Skeleton Scout, and her first, a noble boy, was the Seth of her fair household.

THE END.

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